ESSAYS AND LITERARY STUDIES

STEPHEN LEACOCK

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AND
LITERARY STUDIES

BY STEPHEN LEACOCK
AUTHOR OF "MOONBEAMS FROM THE LARGER LUNACY,"
"NONSENSE NOVELS," "LITERARY LAPSES," ETC.

S. B. GUNDY ∴∴∴∴∴ TORONTO
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I know no more interesting subject of speculation, nor any more calculated to allow of a fair-minded difference of opinion, than the enquiry whether a professor has any right to exist. *Prima facie*, of course, the case is heavily against him. His angular overcoat, his missing buttons, and his faded hat, will not bear comparison with the double-breasted splendour of the stock broker, or the *Directoire* fur gown of the cigar maker. Nor does a native agility of body compensate for the missing allurement of dress. He cannot skate. He does not shoot. He must not swear. He is not brave. His mind, too, to the outsider at any rate, appears defective and seriously damaged by education. He cannot appreciate a twenty-five-cent novel, or a melodrama, or a moving-picture show, or any of that broad current of intellectual movement which soothes the brain of the business man in its moments of inactivity. His conversation, even to the tolerant, is impossible. Apparently he has neither ideas nor enthusiasms, nothing but an elaborate catalogue of dead men's opinions which he cites with a petulant and peevish authority that will not brook contradiction, and that must be soothed by a tolerating acquiescence, or flattered by a plenary acknowledgment of ignorance.

Yet the very heaviness of this initial indictment against the professor might well suggest to an impartial critic that there must at least be mitigating circumstances in the case. Even if we are to admit that the indictment is well founded, the reason is all the greater for examining the basis on which it rests. At any rate some explanation of the facts involved may perhaps serve to palliate, if not to remove, demerits which are rather to be deplored than censured. It is one of the standing defects of our age that social classes, or let us say more narrowly, social categories, know so little of one another. For the purposes of ready reckoning, of that handy transaction of business which is the passion of the hour, we have adopted a way of labelling one another with the tag mark of a profession or an occupation that becomes an aid to business but a barrier to intercourse. This man is a professor, that man an "insurance man," a third—*terque quaterque beatus*—a "liquor man"; with these are "railroad men," "newspaper men," "dry goods men," and so forth. The things that we handle for our livelihood impose themselves upon our personality, till the very word "man" drops out, and a gentleman is referred to as a "heavy pulp and paper interest" while another man is a prominent "rubber plant"; two or three men round a dinner table

become an "iron and steel circle," and thus it is that for the simple conception of a human being is substituted a complex of "interests," "rings," "circles," "sets," and other semi-geometrical figures arising out of avocations rather than affinities. Hence it comes that insurance men mingle with insurance men, liquor men mix, if one may use the term without afterthought, with liquor men: what looks like a lunch between three men at a club is really a cigar having lunch with a couple of plugs of tobacco.

Now the professor more than any ordinary person finds himself shut out from the general society of the business world. The rest of the "interests" have, after all, some things in common. The circles intersect at various points. Iron and steel has a certain fellowship with pulp and paper, and the whole lot of them may be converted into the common ground of preference shares and common stock. But the professor is to all of them an outsider. Hence his natural dissimilarity is unduly heightened in its appearance by the sort of avocational isolation in which he lives.

Let us look further into the status and the setting of the man. To begin with, history has been hard upon him. For some reason the strenuous men of activity and success in the drama of life have felt an instinctive scorn of the academic class, which they have been at no pains to conceal. Bismarck knew of no more bitter taunt to throw at the Free Trade economists of England than to say that they were all either clergymen or professors. Napoleon felt a life-long abhorrence of the class, broken only by one brief experiment that ended in failure. It is related that at the apogee of the Imperial rule, the idea flashed upon him that France must have learned men, that the professors must be encouraged. He decided to act at once. Sixty-five professors were invited that evening to the palace of the Tuileries. They came. They stood about in groups, melancholy and myopic beneath the light. Napoleon spoke to them in turn. To the first he spoke of fortifications. The professor in reply referred to the binomial theorem. "Put him out," said Napoleon. To the second he spoke of commerce. The professor in answer cited the opinions of Diodorus Siculus. "Put him out," said Napoleon. At the end of half an hour Napoleon had had enough of the professors. "Cursed idealogues," he cried; "put them all out." Nor were they ever again admitted.

Nor is it only in this way that the course of history has been unkind to the professor. It is a notable fact in the past, that all persons of eminence who might have shed a lustre upon the academic class are absolved from the title of professor, and the world at large is ignorant that they ever wore it. We never hear of the author of *The Wealth of Nations* as Professor Smith, nor do we know the poet of *Evangeline* as Professor Longfellow. The military world would smile to see the heroes of the Southern Confederacy styled Professor Lee and Professor Jackson.

We do not know of Professor Harrison as the occupant of a President's chair. Those whose talk is of dreadnoughts and of strategy never speak of Professor Mahan, and France has long since forgotten the proper title of Professor Guizot and Professor Taine. Thus it is that the ingratitude of an undiscerning public robs the professorial class of the honour of its noblest names. Nor does the evil stop there. For, in these latter days at least, the same public which eliminates the upward range of the term, applies it downwards and sideways with indiscriminating generality. It is a "professor" who plays upon the banjo. A "professor" teaches swimming. Hair cutting, as an art, is imparted in New York by "professors"; while any gentleman whose thaumaturgic intercommunication with the world of spirits has reached the point of interest which warrants space advertising in the daily press, explains himself as a "professor" to his prospective clients. So it comes that the true professor finds all his poor little attributes of distinction,—his mock dignity, his gown, his string of supplementary letters—all taken over by a mercenary age to be exploited, as the stock in trade of an up-to-date advertiser. The vendor of patent medicine depicts himself in the advertising columns in a gown, with an uplifted hand to shew the Grecian draping of the fold. After his name are placed enough letters and full stops to make up a simultaneous equation in algebra.

The word "professor" has thus become a generic term, indicating the assumption of any form of dexterity, from hair-cutting to running the steam shovel in a crematorium. It is even customary—I am informed—to designate in certain haunts of meretricious gaiety the gentleman whose efforts at the piano are rewarded by a *per capita* contribution of ten cents from every guest,—the "professor."

One may begin to see, perhaps, the peculiar disadvantage under which the professor labours in finding his avocation confused with the various branches of activity for which he can feel nothing but a despairing admiration. But there are various ways also in which the very circumstances of his profession cramp and bind him. In the first place there is no doubt that his mind is very seriously damaged by his perpetual contact with the students. I would not for a moment imply that a university would be better off without the students; although the point is one which might well elicit earnest discussion. But their effect upon the professor is undoubtedly bad. He is surrounded by an atmosphere of sycophantic respect. His students, on his morning arrival, remove his overshoes and hang up his overcoat. They sit all day writing down his lightest words with stylographic pens of the very latest model. They laugh at the meanest of his jests. They treat him with a finely simulated respect that has come down as a faint tradition of the old days of Padua and Bologna, when a professor was in reality the venerated master, a man who wanted to teach, and the

students disciples who wanted to learn.

All that is changed now. The supreme import of the professor to the students now lies in the fact that he controls the examinations. He holds the golden key which will unlock the door of the temple of learning,—unlock it, that is, not to let the student in, but to let him get out,—into something decent. This fact gives to the professor a fictitious importance, easily confounded with his personality, similar to that of the gate keeper at a dog show, or the ticket wicket man at a hockey match.

In this is seen some part of the consequences of the vast, organised thing called modern education. Everything has the merits of its defects. It is a grand thing and a possible thing, that practically all people should possess the intellectual-mechanical arts of reading, writing, and computation: good too that they should possess pigeon-holed and classified data of the geography and history of the world; admirable too that they should possess such knowledge of the principles of natural science as will enable them to put a washer on a kitchen tap, or inflate a motor tire with a soda-syphon bottle. All this is splendid. This we have got. And this places us collectively miles above the rude illiterate men of arms, burghers, and villeins of the middle ages who thought the moon took its light from God, whereas we know that its light is simply a function of π divided by the square of its distance.

Let me not get confused in my thesis. I am saying that the universal distribution of mechanical education is a fine thing, and that we have also proved it possible. But above this is the utterly different thing,—we have no good word for it, call it learning, wisdom, enlightenment, anything you will—which means not a mechanical acquirement from without but something done from within: a power and willingness to think: an interest, for its own sake, in that general enquiry into the form and meaning of life which constitutes the ground plan of education. Now this, desirable though it is, cannot be produced by the mechanical compulsion of organised education. It belongs, and always has, to the few and never to the many. The ability to think is rare. Any man can think and think hard when he has to: the savage devotes a nicety of thought to the equipoise of his club, or the business man to the adjustment of a market price. But the ability or desire to think without compulsion about things that neither warm the hands nor fill the stomach, is very rare. Reflexion on the riddle of life, the cruelty of death, the innate savagery and the sublimity of the creature man, the history and progress of man in his little earth-dish of trees and flowers,—all these things taken either "straight" in the masculine form of philosophy and the social sciences, or taken by diffusion through the feminised form literature, constitute the operation of the educated mind. Of all these things most people in their degree think a little and then stop. They realise presently that these things are very

difficult, and that they don't matter, and that there is no money in them. Old men never think of them at all. They are glad enough to stay in the warm daylight a little longer. For a working solution of these problems different things are done. Some people use a clergyman. Others declare that the Hindoos know all about it. Others, especially of late, pay a reasonable sum for the services of a professional thaumaturgist who supplies a solution of the soul problem by mental treatment at long range, radiating from State St., Chicago. Others, finally, of a native vanity that will not admit itself vanquished, buckle about themselves a few little formulas of "evolution" and "force," co-relate the conception of God to the differentiation of a frog's foot, and strut through life emplumed with the rump-feathers of their own conceit.

I trust my readers will not think that I have forgotten my professor. I have not. All of this digression is but an instance of *reculer pour mieux sauter*. It is necessary to bring out all this back-ground of the subject to show the setting in which the professor is placed. Possibly we shall begin to see that behind this quaint being in his angular overcoat are certain greater facts in respect to the general relation of education to the world of which the professor is only a product, and which help to explain, if they do not remove, the dislocated misfit of his status among his fellow men. We were saying then that the truly higher education—thought about life, mankind, literature, art,—cannot be handed out at will. To attempt to measure it off by the yard, to mark it out into stages and courses, to sell it at the commutation rate represented by a college sessional fee—all this produces a contradiction in terms. For the thing itself is substituted an imitation of it. For real wisdom,—obtainable only by the few,—is substituted a nickel-plated make-believe obtainable by any person of ordinary intellect who has the money, and who has also, in the good old Latin sense, the needful assiduity. I am not saying that the system is bad. It is the best we can get; and incidentally, and at back-rounds it turns out a bye-product in the shape of a capable and well-trained man who has forgotten all about the immortality of the soul, in which he never had any interest any way, but who conducts a law business with admirable efficiency.

The result, then, of this odd-looking system is, that what ought to be a thing existing for itself is turned into a qualification for something else. The reality of a student's studies is knocked out by the grim earnestness of having to pass an examination. How can a man really think of literature, or of the problem of the soul, who knows that he must learn the contents of a set of books in order to pass an examination which will give him the means of his own support and, perhaps, one half the support of his mother, or fifteen per cent. of that of a maiden aunt. The pressure

of circumstances is too much. The meaning of study is lost. The qualification is everything.

Not that the student finds his burden heavy or the situation galling. He takes the situation as he finds it, is hugely benefited by it at back-rounds, and, being young, adapts himself to it: accepts with indifference whatever programme may be needful for the qualification that he wants: studies Hebrew or Choctaw with equal readiness; and, as his education progresses, will write you a morning essay on transcendental utilitarianism, and be back again to lunch. At the end of his course he has learned much. He has learned to sit,—that first requisite for high professional work,—and he can sit for hours. He can write for hours with a stylographic pen: more than that, for I wish to state the case fairly, he can make a digest, or a summary, or a reproduction of anything in the world. Incidentally the *speculation* is all knocked sideways out of him. But the lack of it is never felt.

Observe that it was not so in Padua. The student came thither from afar off, on foot or on a mule; so I picture him at least in my ignorance of Italian history, seated droopingly upon a mule, with earnest, brown eyes hungered with the desire to know, and in his hand a vellum-bound copy of Thomas Aquinas written in long hand, priceless, as *he* thinks, for the wisdom it contains. Now the Padua student wanted to know: not for a qualification, not because he wanted to be a pharmaceutical expert with a municipal licence, but because he thought the things in Thomas Aquinas and such to be things of tremendous import. They were not; but he thought so. This student thought that he could really find out things: that if he listened daily to the words of the master who taught him, and read hard, and thought hard, he would presently discover real truths,—the only things in life that he cared for,—such as whether the soul is a fluid or a solid, whether his mule existed or was only a vapour, and much other of this sort. These things he fully expected to learn. For their sake he brought to bear on the person of his teacher that reverential admiration which survives faintly to-day, like a biological "vestige," in the attitude of the college student who holds the overcoat of his professor. The Padua student, too, got what he came for. After a time he knew all about the soul, all about his mule,—knew, too, something of the more occult, the almost devilish sciences, perilous to tackle, such as why the sun is suspended from falling into the ocean, or the very demonology of symbolism,—the AL-GEB of the Arabians—by which X + Y taken to the double or square can be shown after many days' computation to be equal to $X^2 + 2XY + Y^2$.

A man with such knowledge simply *had* to teach it. What to him if he should wear a brown gown of frieze and feed on pulse! This, as beside the bursting force of

the expanding steam of his knowledge, counted for nothing. So he went forth, and he in turn became a professor, a man of profound acquirement, whose control over malign comets elicited a shuddering admiration.

These last reflections seem to suggest that it is not merely that something has gone wrong with the attitude of the student and the professor towards knowledge, but that something has gone wrong with knowledge itself. We have got the thing into such a shape that we do not know one-tenth as much as we used to. Our modern scholarship has poked and pried in so many directions, has set itself to be so ultra-rational, so hyper-sceptical, that now it knows nothing at all. All the old certainty has vanished. The good old solid dogmatic dead-sureness that buckled itself in the oak and brass of its own stupidity is clean gone. It died at about the era of the country squire, the fox-hunting parson, the three-bottle Prime Minister, and the voluminous Doctor of Divinity in broadcloth imperturbable even in sobriety, and positively omniscient when drunk. We have argued them off the stage of a world all too ungrateful. In place of their sturdy outlines appear that sickly anæmic Modern Scholarship, the double-jointed jack-in-the-box, Modern Religion, the feminine angularity of Modern Morality, bearing a jug of filtered water, and behind them, as the very lord of wisdom, the grinning mechanic, Practical Science, using the broadcloth suit of the defunct doctor as his engine-room over-alls. Or if we prefer to place the same facts without the aid of personification, our learning has so watered itself down that the starch and consistency is all out of it. There is no absolute sureness anywhere. Everything is henceforth to be a development, an evolution; morals and ethics are turned from fixed facts to shifting standards that change from age to age like the fashion of our clothes; art and literature are only a product, not good or bad, but a part of its age and environment. So it comes that our formal studies are no longer a burning quest for absolute truth. We have long since discovered that we cannot know anything. Our studies consist only in the long-drawn proof of the futility for the search after knowledge effected by exposing the errors of the past. Philosophy is the science which proves that we can know nothing of the soul. Medicine is the science which tells that we know nothing of the body. Political Economy is that which teaches that we know nothing of the laws of wealth; and Theology the critical history of those errors from which we deduce our ignorance of God.

When I sit and warm my hands, as best I may, at the little heap of embers that is now Political Economy, I cannot but contrast its dying glow with the generous blaze of the vainglorious and triumphant science that once it was.

Such is the distinctive character of modern learning, imprint with a resigned

agnosticism towards the search after truth, able to refute everything and to believe nothing, and leaving its once earnest devotees stranded upon the arid sands of their own ignorance. In the face of this fact can it be wondered that a university converts itself into a sort of mill, grinding out its graduates, legally qualified, with conscientious regularity? The students take the mill as they find it, perform their task and receive their reward. They listen to their professor. They write down with stylographic pens in loose-leaf note books his most inane and his most profound speculations with an undiscriminating impartiality. The reality of the subject leaves but little trace upon their minds.

All of what has been said above has been directed mainly towards the hardship of the professor's lot upon its scholastic side. Let me turn to another aspect of his life, the moral. By a strange confusion of thought a professor is presumed to be a good man. His standing association with the young and the history of his profession, which was once amalgamated with that of the priesthood, give him a connexion at one remove with morality. He therefore finds himself in that category of men,—including himself and the curate as its chief representatives,—to whom the world at large insists on ascribing a rectitude of character and a simplicity of speech that unfits them for ordinary society. It is gratuitously presumed that such men prefer tea to whiskey-and-soda, blindman's buff to draw poker, and a freshmen's picnic to a prize fight.

For the curate of course I hold no brief. Let him sink. In any case he has to console him the favour of the sex, a concomitant perhaps of his very harmlessness, but productive at the same time of creature comforts. Soft slippers deck his little feet, flowers lie upon his study table, and round his lungs the warmth of an embroidered chest-protector proclaims the favour of the fair. Of this the ill-starred professor shares nothing. It is a sad fact that he is at once harmless and despised. He may lecture for twenty years and never find so much as a mullein stalk upon his desk. For him no canvas slippers, knitted by fair fingers, nor the flowered gown, nor clock-worked hosiery of the ecclesiastic. The sex will have none of him. I do not mean, of course, that there are no women that form exceptions to this rule. We have all seen immolated upon the academic hearth, and married to professors, women whose beauty and accomplishments would have adorned the home of a wholesale liquor merchant. But the broad rule still obtains. Women who embody, so St. Augustine has told us, the very principle of evil, can only really feel attracted towards bad men. The professor is too good for them.

Whether a professor is of necessity a good man, is a subject upon which I must not presume to dogmatise. The women may be right in voting him a "muff." But if he

is such in any degree, the conventional restrictions of his profession tend to heighten it. The bursts of profanity that are hailed as a mark of business energy on the part of a railroad magnate or a cabinet minister are interdicted to a professor. It is a canon of his profession that he must never become violent, nor lift his hand in anger. I believe that it was not always so. The story runs, authentic enough, that three generations ago a Harvard professor in a fit of anger with a colleague (engendered, if I recall the case, by the discussion of a nice point in thermo-dynamics) threw him into a chemical furnace and burned him. But the buoyancy of those days is past. In spite of the existence of our up-to-date apparatus, I do not believe that any of our present professoriate has yielded to such an impulse.

One other point remains worthy of remark in the summation of the heavy disadvantages under which the professor lives and labours. He does not know how to make money. This is a grave fault, and one that in the circumstances of the day can scarcely be overlooked. It comes down to him as a legacy of the Padua days when the professor neither needed money nor thought of it. Now when he would like money he is hampered by an "evoluted" inability to get hold of it. He dares not commercialise his profession, or does not know how to do so. Had he the business instinct of the leaders of labour and the master manufacturers, he would long since have set to work at the problem. He would have urged his government to put so heavy a tax on the import of foreign professors as to keep the home market for himself. He would have organised himself into amalgamated Brotherhoods of Instructors of Latin, United Greek Workers of America, and so forth, organised strikes, picketed the houses of the college trustees, and made himself a respected place as a member of industrial society. This his inherited inaptitude forbids him to do.

Nor can the professor make money out of what he knows. Somehow a plague is on the man. A teacher of English cannot write a half-dime novel, nor a professor of dynamics invent a safety razor. The truth is that a modern professor for commercial purposes doesn't know anything. He only knows parts of things.

It occurred to me some years ago when the Cobalt silver mines were first discovered that a professor of scientific attainments ought to be able, by transferring his talent to that region, to amass an enormous fortune. I questioned one of the most gifted of my colleagues. "Could you not," I asked, "as a specialist in metals discover silver mines at sight?" "Oh, no," he said, shuddering at the very idea, "you see I'm only a metallurgist; at Cobalt the silver is all in the rocks and I know nothing of rocks whatever." "Who then," I said, "knows about rocks?" "For that," he answered, "you need a geologist like Adamson; but then, you see, he knows the rocks, but doesn't

know the silver." "But could you not both go," I said, "and Adamson hold the rock while you extracted the silver?" "Oh, no," the professor answered, "you see we are neither of us mining engineers; and even then we ought to have a good hydraulic man and an electric man." "I suppose," I said, "that if I took about seventeen of you up there you might find something. No? Well, would it not be possible to get somebody who would know something of *all* these things?" "Yes," he said, "any of the fourth-year students would, but personally all that I do is to reduce the silver when I get it." "That I can do myself," I answered musingly, and left him.

Such then is the professor; a man whose avocation in life is hampered by the history of its past: imparting in the form of statutory exercises knowledge that in its origin meant a spontaneous effort of the intelligence, whose very learning itself has become a profession rather than a pursuit, whose mock dignity and fictitious morality remove him from the society of his own sex and deny to him the favour of the other. Surely, in this case, to understand is to sympathise. Is it not possible, too, that when all is said and done the professor is performing a useful service in the world, unconsciously of course, in acting as a leaven in the lump of commercialism that sits so heavily on the world to-day? I do not wish to expand upon this theme. I had set out to make the apology of the professor speak for itself from the very circumstances of his work. But in these days, when money is everything, when pecuniary success is the only goal to be achieved, when the voice of the plutocrat is as the voice of God, the aspect of the professor, side-tracked in the real race of life, riding his mule of Padua in competition with an automobile, may at least help to soothe the others who have failed in the struggle.

Dare one, as the wildest of fancies, suggest how different things might be if learning counted, or if we could set it on its feet again, if students wanted to learn, and if professors had anything to teach, if a university lived for itself and not as a place of qualification for the junior employees of the rich; if there were only in this perplexing age some way of living humbly and retaining the respect of one's fellows; if a man with a few hundred dollars a year could cast out the money question and the house question, and the whole business of competitive appearances and live for the things of the mind! But then, after all, if the mind as a speculative instrument has gone bankrupt, if learning, instead of meaning a mind full of thought, means only a bellyful of fact, one is brought to a full stop, standing among the littered debris of an ideal that has passed away.

In any case the question, if it is one, is going to settle itself. The professor is passing away. The cost of living has laid its hold upon him, and grips him in its coils; within another generation he will be starved out, frozen out, "evoluted" out by that

glorious process of natural selection and adaptation, the rigour of which is the only God left in our desolated Pantheon. The male school-teacher is gone, the male clerk is going, and already on the horizon of the academic market rises the Woman with the Spectacles, the rude survivalist who, in the coming generation, will dispense the elements of learning cut to order, without an afterthought of what it once has meant.

II.—The Devil and the Deep Sea
A Discussion of Modern Morality

The Devil is passing out of fashion. After a long and honourable career he has fallen into an ungrateful oblivion. His existence has become shadowy, his outline attenuated, and his personality displeasing to a complacent generation. So he stands now leaning on the handle of his three-pronged oyster fork and looking into the ashes of his smothered fire. Theology will have none of him. Genial clergy of ample girth, stuffed with the buttered toast of a rectory tea, are preaching him out of existence. The fires of his material hell are replaced by the steam heat of moral torture. This even the most sensitive of sinners faces with equanimity. So the Devil's old dwelling is dismantled and stands by the roadside with a sign-board bearing the legend, "Museum of Moral Torment, These Premises to Let." In front of it, in place of the dancing imp of earlier ages, is a poor make-believe thing, a jack-o'-lantern on a stick, with a turnip head and candle eyes, labelled "Demon of Moral Repentance, Guaranteed Worse than Actual Fire." The poor thing grins in its very harmlessness.

Now that the Devil is passing away an unappreciative generation fails to realise the high social function that he once performed. There he stood for ages a simple and workable basis of human morality; an admirable first-hand reason for being good, which needed no ulterior explanation. The rude peasant of the Middle Ages, the illiterate artisan of the shop, and the long-haired hind of the fields, had no need to speculate upon the problem of existence and the tangled skein of moral enquiry. The Devil took all that off their hands. He had either to "be good" or else he "got the fork," just as in our time the unsuccessful comedian of amateur night in the vaudeville houses "gets the hook." Humanity, with the Devil to prod it from behind, moved steadily upwards on the path of moral development. Then having attained a certain elevation, it turned upon its tracks, denied that there had been any Devil, rubbed itself for a moment by way of investigation, said that there had been no prodding, and then fell to wandering about on the hilltops without any fixed idea of goal or direction.

In other words, with the disappearance of the Devil there still remains unsolved the problem of conduct, and behind it the riddle of the universe. How are we getting along without the Devil? How are we managing to be good without the fork? What is happening to our conception of goodness itself?

To begin with, let me disclaim any intention of writing of morality from the point

of view of the technical, or professional, moral philosopher. Such a person would settle the whole question by a few references to pragmatism, transcendentalism, and esoteric synthesis,—leaving his auditors angry but unable to retaliate. This attitude, I am happy to say, I am quite unable to adopt. I do not know what pragmatism is, and I do not care. I know the word transcendental only in connexion with advertisements for "gents' furnishings." If Kant, or Schopenhauer, or Anheuser Busch have already settled these questions, I cannot help it.

In any case, it is my opinion that now-a-days we are overridden in the specialties, each in his own department of learning, with his tags, and label, and his pigeon-hole category of proper names, precluding all discussion by ordinary people. No man may speak fittingly of the soul without spending at least six weeks in a theological college; morality is the province of the moral philosopher who is prepared to pelt the intruder back over the fence with a shower of German commentaries. Ignorance, in its wooden shoes, shuffles around the portico of the temple of learning, stumbling among the litter of terminology. The broad field of human wisdom has been cut into a multitude of little professorial rabbit warrens. In each of these a specialist burrows deep, scratching out a shower of terminology, head down in an unlovely attitude which places an interlocutor at a grotesque conversational disadvantage.

May I digress a minute to show what I mean by the inconvenience of modern learning? This happened at a summer boarding-house where I spent a portion of the season of rest, in company with a certain number of ordinary, ignorant people like myself. We got on well together. In the evenings on the verandah we talked of nature and of its beauties, of the stars and why they were so far away,—we didn't know their names, thank goodness;—and such-like simple topics of conversation.

Sometimes under the influence of a double-shotted sentimentalism sprung from huckleberry pie and doughnuts, we even spoke of the larger issues of life, and exchanged opinions on immortality. We used no technical terms. We knew none. The talk was harmless and happy. Then there came among us a faded man in a coat that had been black before it turned green, who was a Ph.D. of Oberlin College. The first night he sat on the verandah, somebody said how beautiful the sunset was. Then the man from Oberlin spoke up and said: "Yes, one could almost fancy it a pre-Raphaelite conception with the same chiaroscuro in the atmosphere." There was a pause. That ended all nature study for almost an hour. Later in the evening, some one who had been reading a novel said in simple language that he was sick of having the hero always come out on top. "Ah," said the man from Oberlin, "but doesn't that precisely correspond with Nitch's idea (he meant, I suppose, Nietzsche, but he

pronounced it to rhyme with 'bitch') of the dominance of man over fate?" Mr. Hezekiah Smith who kept the resort looked round admiringly and said, "Ain't he a *terr*?" He certainly was. While the man from Oberlin stayed with us, elevating conversation was at an end, and a self-conscious ignorance hung upon the verandah like a fog.

However, let us get back to the Devil. Let us notice in the first place that because we have kicked out the Devil as an absurd and ridiculous superstition, unworthy of a scientific age, we have by no means eliminated the super-natural and the super-rational from the current thought of our time. I suppose there never was an age more riddled with superstition, more credulous, more drunkenly addicted to thaumaturgy than the present. The Devil in his palmiest days was nothing to it. In despite of our vaunted material common-sense, there is a perfect craving abroad for belief in something beyond the compass of the believable.

It shows itself in every age and class. Simpering Seventeen gets its fortune told on a weighing machine, and shudders with luxurious horror at the prospective villainy of the Dark Man who is to cross her life. Senile Seventy gravely sits on a wooden bench at a wonder-working meeting, waiting for a gentleman in a "Tuxedo" jacket to call up the soul of Napoleon Bonaparte, and ask its opinion of Mr. Taft. Here you have a small tenement, let us say, on South Clark St., Chicago. What is it? It is the home of Nadir the Nameless, the great Hindoo astrologer. Who are in the front room? Clients waiting for a revelation of the future. Where is Nadir? He is behind a heavily draped curtain, worked with Indian serpents. By the waiting clients Nadir is understood to be in consultation with the twin fates, Isis and Osiris. In reality Nadir is frying potatoes. Presently he will come out from behind the curtain and announce that Osiris has spoken (that is, the potatoes are now finished and on the back of the stove) and that he is prepared to reveal hidden treasure at 40 cents a revelation. Marvellous, is it not, this Hindoo astrology business? And any one can be a Nadir the Nameless, who cares to stain his face blue with thimbleberry juice, wrap a red turban round his forehead, and cut the rate of revelation to 35 cents. Such is the credulity of the age which has repudiated the Devil as too difficult of belief.

We have, it is true, moved far away from the Devil; but are we after all so much better off? or do we, in respect of the future, contain within ourselves the promise of better things. I suppose that most of us would have the general idea that there never was an age which displayed so high a standard of morality, or at least of ordinary human decency, as our own. We look back with a shudder to the blood-stained history of our ancestors; the fires of Smithfield with the poor martyr writhing about his post, frenzied and hysterical in the flames; the underground cell where the poor

remnant of humanity turned its haggard face to the torch of the entering gaoler; the madhouse itself with its gibbering occupants converted into a show for the idle fools of London. We may well look back on it all and say that, at least, we are better than we were. The history of our little human race would make but sorry reading were not its every page imprinted with the fact that human ingenuity has invented no torment too great for human fortitude to bear.

In general decency—sympathy—we have undoubtedly progressed. Our courts of law have forgotten the use of the thumbkins and boot; we do not press a criminal under "weights greater than he can bear" in order to induce him to plead; nor flog to ribbands the bleeding back of the malefactor dragged at the cart's tail through the thoroughfares of a crowded city. Our public, objectionable though it is, as it fights its way to its ball games, breathes peanuts and peppermint upon the offended atmosphere, and shrieks aloud its chronic and collective hysteria, is at all events better than the leering oafs of the Elizabethan century, who put hard-boiled eggs in their pockets and sat around upon the grass waiting for the "burning" to begin.

But when we have admitted that we are better than we were as far as the *facts* of our moral conduct go, we may well ask as to the principles upon which our conduct is based. In past ages there was the authoritative moral code as a guide—thou shalt and thou shalt not—and behind it the pains, and the penalties, and the three-pronged oyster fork. Under that influence, humanity, or a large part of it, slowly and painfully acquired the moral habit. At present it goes on, as far as its actions are concerned, with the momentum of the old beliefs.

But when we turn from the actions on the surface to the ideas underneath, we find in our time a strange confusion of beliefs out of which is presently to be made the New Morality. Let us look at some of the varied ideas manifested in the cross sections of the moral tendencies of our time.

Here we have first of all the creed and cult of self-development. It arrogates to itself the title of New Thought, but contains in reality nothing but the Old Selfishness. According to this particular outlook the goal of morality is found in fully developing one's self. Be large, says the votary of this creed, be high, be broad. He gives a shilling to a starving man, not that the man may be fed but that he himself may be a shilling-giver. He cultivates sympathy with the destitute for the sake of being sympathetic. The whole of his virtue and his creed of conduct runs to a cheap and easy egomania in which his blind passion for himself causes him to use external people and things as mere reactions upon his own personality. The immoral little toad swells itself to the bursting point in its desire to be a moral ox.

In its more ecstatic form, this creed expresses itself in a sort of general feeling of

"uplift," or the desire for internal moral expansion. The votary is haunted by the idea of his own elevation. He wants to get into touch with nature, to swim in the Greater Being, "to tune himself," harmonise himself, and generally to perform on himself as on a sort of moral accordion. He gets himself somehow mixed up with natural objects, with the sadness of autumn, falls with the leaves and drips with the dew. Were it not for the complacent self-sufficiency which he induces, his refined morality might easily verge into simple idiocy. Yet, odd though it may seem, this creed of self-development struts about with its head high as one of the chief moral factors which have replaced the authoritative dogma of the older time.

The vague and hysterical desire to "uplift" one's self merely for exaltation's sake is about as effective an engine of moral progress as the effort to lift one's self in the air by a terrific hitching up of the breeches.

The same creed has its physical side. It parades the Body, with a capital B, as also a thing that must be developed; and this, not for any ulterior thing that may be effected by it but presumably as an end in itself. The Monk or the Good Man of the older day despised the body as a thing that must learn to know its betters. He spiked it down with a hair shirt to teach it the virtue of submission. He was of course very wrong and very objectionable. But one doubts if he was much worse than his modern successor who joys consciously in the operation of his pores and his glands, and the correct rhythmical contraction of his abdominal muscles, as if he constituted simply a sort of superior sewerage system.

I once knew a man called Juggins who exemplified this point of view. He used to ride a bicycle every day to train his muscles and to clear his brain. He looked at all the scenery that he passed to develop his taste for scenery. He gave to the poor to develop his sympathy with poverty. He read the Bible regularly in order to cultivate the faculty of reading the Bible, and visited picture galleries with painful assiduity in order to give himself a feeling for art. He passed through life with a strained and haunted expression waiting for clarity of intellect, greatness of soul, and a passion for art to descend upon him like a flock of doves. He is now dead. He died presumably in order to cultivate the sense of being a corpse.

No doubt, in the general scheme or purpose of things the cult of self-development and the botheration about the Body may, through the actions which it induces, be working for a good end. It plays a part, no doubt, in whatever is to be the general evolution of morality.

And there, in that very word evolution, we are brought face to face with another of the wide-spread creeds of our day, which seek to replace the older. This one is not so much a guide to conduct as a theory, and a particularly cheap and easy one,

of a general meaning and movement of morality. The person of this persuasion is willing to explain everything in terms of its having been once something else and being about to pass into something further still. Evolution, as the natural scientists know it, is a plain and straightforward matter, not so much a theory as a view of a succession of facts taken in organic relation. It assumes no purposes whatever. It is not—if I may be allowed a professor's luxury of using a word which will not be understood—in any degree teleological.

The social philosopher who adopts the evolutionary theory of morals is generally one who is quite in the dark as to the true conception of evolution itself. He understands from Darwin, Huxley, and other great writers whom he has not read, that the animals have been fashioned into their present shape by a long process of twisting, contortion, and selection, at once laborious and deserving. The giraffe lengthened its neck by conscientious stretching; the frog webbed its feet by perpetual swimming; and the bird broke out in feathers by unremitting flying. "Nature" by weeding out the short giraffe, the inadequate frog, and the top-heavy bird encouraged by selection the ones most "fit to survive." Hence the origin of species, the differentiation of organs—hence, in fact, everything.

Here, too, when the theory is taken over and mis-translated from pure science to the humanities, is found the explanation of all our social and moral growth. Each of our religious customs is like the giraffe's neck. A manifestation such as the growth of Christianity is regarded as if humanity broke out into a new social organism, in the same way as the ascending amœba breaks out into a stomach. With this view of human relations, nothing in the past is said to be either good or bad. Everything is a movement. Cannibalism is a sort of apprenticeship in meat-eating. The institution of slavery is seen as an evolutionary stage towards free citizenship, and "Uncle Tom's" overseer is no longer a nigger-driver but a social force tending towards the survival of the Booker Washington type of negro.

With his brain saturated with the chloroform of this social dogma, the moral philosopher ceases to be able to condemn anything at all, measures all things with a centimetre scale of his little doctrine, and finds them all of the same length. Whereupon he presently desists from thought altogether, calls everything bad or good an evolution, and falls asleep with his hands folded upon his stomach murmuring, "survival of the fittest."

Anybody who will look at the thing candidly, will see that the evolutionary explanation of morals is meaningless, and presupposes the existence of the very thing it ought to prove. It starts from a misconception of the biological doctrine. Biology has nothing to say as to what ought to survive and what ought not to survive; it

merely speaks of what does survive. The burdock easily kills the violet, and the Canadian skunk lingers where the hummingbird has died. In biology the test of fitness to survive is the fact of the survival itself—nothing else. To apply this doctrine to the moral field brings out grotesque results. The successful burglar ought to be presented by society with a nickel-plated "jimmy," and the starving cripple left to die in the ditch. Everything—any phase of movement or religion—which succeeds, is right. Anything which does not is wrong. Everything which is, is right; everything which was, is right; everything which will be, is right. All we have to do is to sit still and watch it come. This is moral evolution.

On such a basis, we might expect to find, as the general outcome of the new moral code now in the making, the simple worship of success. This is exactly what is happening. The morality which the Devil with his oyster fork was commissioned to inculcate was essentially altruistic. Things were to be done for other people. The new ideas, if you combine them in a sort of moral amalgam—to develop one's self, to evolve, to measure things by their success—weigh on the other side of the scale. So it comes about that the scale begins to turn and the new morality shows signs of exalting the old-fashioned Badness in place of the discredited Goodness. Hence we find, saturating our contemporary literature, the new worship of the Strong Man, the easy pardon of the Unscrupulous, the Apotheosis of the Jungle, and the Deification of the Detective. Force, brute force, is what we now turn to as the moral ideal, and Mastery and Success are the sole tests of excellence. The nation cuddles its multi-millionaires, cinematographs itself silly with the pictures of its prize fighters, and even casts an eye of slantwise admiration through the bars of its penitentiaries. Beside these things the simple Good Man of the older dispensation, with his worn alpaca coat and his obvious inefficiency, is nowhere.

Truly, if we go far enough with it, the Devil may come to his own again, and more than his own, not merely as Head Stoker but as what is called an End in Himself.

I knew a little man called Bliggs. He worked in a railroad office, a simple, dusty, little man, harmless at home and out of it till he read of Napoleon and heard of the thing called a Superman. Then somebody told him of Nitch, and he read as much Nitch as he could understand. The thing went to his head. Morals were no longer for him. He used to go home from the office and be a Superman by the hour, curse if his dinner was late, and strut the length of his little home with a silly irritation which he mistook for moral enfranchisement. Presently he took to being a Superman in business hours, and the railroad dismissed him. They know nothing of Nitch in such crude places. It has often seemed to me that Bliggs typified much of the present

moral movement.

Our poor Devil then is gone. We cannot have him back for the whistling. For generations, as yet unlearned in social philosophy, he played a useful part—a dual part in a way, for it was his function to illustrate at once the pleasures and the penalties of life. Merriment in the scheme of things was his, and for those drawn too far in pleasure and merriment, retribution and the oyster fork.

I can see him before me now, his long, eager face and deep-set, brown eyes, pathetic with the failure of ages—carrying with him his pack of cards, his amber flask, and his little fiddle. Let but the door of the cottage stand open upon a winter night, and the Devil would blow in, offering his flask and fiddle, or rattling his box of dice.

So with his twin incentives of pain and pleasure he coaxed and prodded humanity on its path, till it reached the point where it repudiated him, called itself a Superman, and headed straight for the cliff over which is the deep sea. *Quo vadimus?*

III.—Literature and Education in America

It may be well to remind the reader at the outset of this article that Canada is in America. A Canadian writer may therefore with no great impropriety use the term American, for want of any other word, in reference to the literature and education of all the English-speaking people between the Rio Grande and the North Pole. There is, moreover, a certain warrant of fact for such a usage. Canadian literature,—as far as there is such a thing,—Canadian journalism, and the education and culture of the mass of the people of Canada approximates more nearly to the type and standard of the United States than to those of Great Britain. Whatever accusations may be brought against the literature and education of the American republic apply equally well—indeed very probably apply with even greater force—to the Dominion of Canada.

This modest apology may fittingly be offered before throwing stones at the glass house in which both the Canadians and the Americans proper dwell.

Now it is a fact which had better be candidly confessed than indignantly denied that up to the present time the contribution of America to the world's great literature has been disappointingly small. There are no doubt great exceptions. We number at least some of the world's great writers on this side of the Atlantic. American humour, in reputation at any rate, may claim equality if not pre-eminence. And the signs are not wanting—they are seen in the intense realism of our short stories, and the concentrated power of our one-act plays,—that we may some day come into our own. But in spite of this, the indictment holds good that up to the present we have fallen far short of what might have been properly expected of our civilisation.

I am quite aware that on this point I shall meet denial at the outset.

I once broached this question of the relative inferiority of the literary output of America to that of the old world to a gentleman from Kentucky. He answered, "I am afraid, sir, you are imperfectly acquainted with the work of our Kentucky poets." In the same way a friend of mine from Maryland has assured me that immediately before the war that State had witnessed the most remarkable literary development recorded since the time of Plato. I am also credibly informed that the theological essayists of Prince Edward Island challenge comparison with those of any age. It is no doubt not the fault of the Islanders that this challenge has not yet been accepted. But I am speaking here not of that literature which, though excellent in its way, is known only to the immediate locality which it adorns, but rather of those works of such eminent merit and such wide repute as to be properly classed among the

literature of the world. To what a very small share of this, during the last hundred years of our history, can we in America lay claim.

This phenomenon becomes all the more remarkable when we reflect upon the unparalleled advance that has been made in this country in the growth of population, in material resources, and in the purely mechanical side of progress. Counted after the fashion of the census taker, which is our favourite American method of computation, we now number over a hundred million souls. It is some seventy years since our rising population equalled and passed that of the British Isles: a count of heads, dead and alive, during the century would show us more numerous than the British people by two to one: we erect buildings fifty stories high: we lay a mile of railroad track in twenty-four hours: the corn that we grow and the hogs that we raise are the despair of aristocratic Europe; and yet when it comes to the production of real literature, the benighted people of the British Islands can turn out more of it in a twelvemonth than our hundred million souls can manufacture in three decades.

For proof of this, if proof is needed, one has but to consider fairly and dispassionately the record of the century. How few are the names of first rank that we can offer to the world. In poetry Longfellow, Bryant, Lowell, Whittier, Whitman, with two or three others exhaust the list: of historians of the front rank we have Bancroft, Motley, Prescott and in a liberal sense, Francis Parkman: of novelists, tale writers and essayists we can point with pride to Irving, Poe, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, James and some few others as names that are known to the world: of theologians we have Colonel Ingersoll, Mrs. Eddy, and Caroline Nation. But brilliant as many of these writers are, can one for a moment compare them with the imposing list of the great names that adorn the annals of British literature in the nineteenth century? Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne are household names to every educated American. Novelists and tale writers such as Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Meredith, Kipling, and Stevenson cannot be matched in our country. How seldom are essayists and historians of the class of Carlyle, Macaulay, Gibbon, Green, Huxley, Arnold, Morley, and Bryce produced among our hundred million of free and enlightened citizens. These and a hundred other illustrious names spring to one's mind to illustrate the splendour of British literature in the nineteenth century. But surely it is unfair to ourselves to elaborate needlessly so plain a point. The candid reader will be fain to admit that the bulk of the valuable literature of the English-speaking peoples written within the last hundred years has been produced within the British Isles.

Nor can we plead in extenuation that inspiration has been lacking to us. Indeed the very contrary is the case. What can be conceived more stimulating to the poetic

imagination than the advance of American civilisation into the broad plains of the Mississippi and the Saskatchewan, the passage of the unknown mountains and the descent of the treasure seekers upon the Eldorado of the coast? What finer background for literature than the silent untravelled forests and the broad rivers moving to unknown seas? In older countries the landscape is known and circumscribed. Parish church, and village, and highway succeed one another in endless alternation. There is nothing to discover, no untraversed country to penetrate. There is no mystery beyond. Thus if the old world is rich in history, rich in associations that render the simple compass of a village green a sacred spot as the battleground of long ago, so too is the new world rich in the charm and mystery of the unknown, and in the lofty stimulus that comes from the unbroken silence of the primeval forest. It was within the darkness of ancient woods that the spirits were first conceived in the imagination of mankind and that literature had its birth. A Milton or a Bunyan, that could dream dreams and see visions within the prosaic streets of an English country town—would such a man have found no inspiration could he have stood at night where the wind roars among the pine forests of the Peace, or where the cold lights of the Aurora illumine the endless desolation of the north? But alas, the Miltons and the Bunyans are not among us. The aspect of primeval nature does not call to our minds the vision of Unseen Powers riding upon the midnight blast. To us the midnight blast represents an enormous quantity of horse-power going to waste; the primeval forest is a first-class site for a saw mill, and the leaping cataract tempts us to erect a red-brick hydro-electric establishment on its banks and make it leap to some purpose.

The fact of the matter is that despite our appalling numerical growth and mechanical progress, despite the admirable physical appliances offered by our fountain pens, our pulpwood paper, and our linotype press, the progress of literature and the general diffusion of literary appreciation on this continent is not commensurate with the other aspects of our social growth. Our ordinary citizen in America is not a literary person. He has but little instinct towards letters, a very restricted estimation of literature as an art, and neither envy nor admiration for those who cultivate it. A book for him means a thing by which the strain on the head is relieved after the serious business of the day and belongs in the same general category as a burlesque show or a concertina solo: general information means a general knowledge of the results of the last election, and philosophical speculation is represented by speculation upon the future of the Democratic party. Education is synonymous with ability to understand the stock-exchange page of the morning paper, and culture means a silk hat and the habit of sleeping in pyjamas.

Not the least striking feature in the literary sterility of America is the fact that we are, at any rate as measured by any mechanical standard, a very highly educated people. If education can beget literature, it is here in America that the art of letters should most chiefly flourish. In no country in the world is more time, more thought, and more money spent upon education than in America. School books pour from our presses in tons. Manuals are prepared by the million, for use either with or without a teacher, manuals for the deaf, manuals for the dumb, manuals for the deficient, for the half-deficient, for the three-quarters deficient, manuals of hygiene for the feeble and manuals of temperance for the drunk. Instruction can be had orally, vocally, verbally, by correspondence or by mental treatment. Twelve million of our children are at school. The most skilful examiners apply to them every examination that human cruelty can invent or human fortitude can endure. In higher education alone thirty-five thousand professors lecture unceasingly to three hundred thousand students. Surely so vast and complicated a machine might be expected to turn out scholars, poets, and men of letters such as the world has never seen before. Yet it is surprising that the same unliterary, anti-literary tendency that is seen throughout our whole social environment, manifests itself also in the peculiar and distorted form given in our higher education and in the singular barrenness of its results.

There can be no greater contrast than that offered by the system of education in Great Britain, broad and almost planless in its outline, yet admirable in its results and the carefully planned and organised higher education of America. The one, in some indefinable way, fosters, promotes, and develops the true instinct of literature. It puts a premium upon genius. It singles out originality and mental power and accentuates natural inequality, caring less for the commonplace achievements of the many than for the transcendent merit of the few. The other system absurdly attempts to reduce the whole range of higher attainment to the measured and organised grinding of a mill: it undertakes to classify ability and to measure intellectual progress with a yard measure, and to turn out in its graduates a "standardised" article similar to steel rails or structural beams, with interchangeable parts in their brains and all of them purchasable in the market at the standard price.

The root of the matter and its essential bearing upon the question of literary development in general is that the two systems of education take their start from two entirely opposite points of view.

The older view of education, which is rapidly passing away in America, but which is still dominant in the great Universities of England, aimed at a wide and humane culture of the intellect. It regarded the various departments of learning as

forming essentially a unity, some pursuit of each being necessary to the intelligent comprehension of the whole, and a reasonable grasp of the whole being necessary to the appreciation of each. It is true that the system followed in endeavouring to realise this ideal took as its basis the literature of Greece and Rome. But this was rather made the starting point for a general knowledge of the literature, the history and the philosophy of all ages than regarded as offering in itself the final goal of education.

Now our American system pursues a different path. It breaks up the field of knowledge into many departments, subdivides these into special branches and sections, and calls upon the scholar to devote himself to a microscopic activity in some part of a section of a branch of a department of the general field of learning. This specialised system of education that we pursue does not of course begin at once. Any system of training must naturally first devote itself to the acquiring of a rudimentary knowledge of such elementary things as reading, spelling, and the humbler aspects of mathematics. But the further the American student proceeds the more this tendency to specialisation asserts itself. When he enters upon what are called post-graduate studies, he is expected to become altogether a specialist, devoting his whole mind to the study of the left foot of the garden frog, or to the use of the ablative in Tacitus, or to the history of the first half hour of the Reformation. As he continues on his upward way, the air about him gets rarer and rarer, his path becomes more and more solitary until he reaches, and encamps upon, his own little pinnacle of refined knowledge staring at his feet and ignorant of the world about him, the past behind him, and the future before him. At the end of his labours he publishes a useless little pamphlet called his thesis which is new in the sense that nobody ever wrote it before, and erudite in the sense that nobody will ever read it. Meantime the American student's ignorance of all things except his own part of his own subject has grown colossal. The unused parts of his intellect have ossified. His interest in general literature, his power of original thought, indeed his wish to think at all, is far less than it was in the second year of his undergraduate course. More than all that, his interestingness to other people has completely departed. Even with his fellow scholars so-called he can find no common ground of intellectual intercourse. If three men sit down together and one is a philologist, the second a numismatist, and the third a subsection of a conchologist, what can they find to talk about?

I have had occasion in various capacities to see something of the working of this system of the higher learning. Some years ago I resided for a month or two with a group of men who were specialists of the type described, most of them in pursuit of their degree of Doctor of Philosophy, some of them—easily distinguished by their air

of complete vacuity—already in possession of it. The first night I dined with them, I addressed to the man opposite me some harmless question about a recent book that I thought of general interest. "I don't know anything about that," he answered, "I'm in sociology." There was nothing to do but to beg his pardon and to apologise for not having noticed it.

Another of these same men was studying classics on the same plan. He was engaged in composing a doctor's thesis on the genitive of value in Plautus. For eighteen months past he had read nothing but Plautus. The manner of his reading was as follows: first he read Plautus all through and picked out all the verbs of estimating followed by the genitive, then he read it again and picked out the verbs of reckoning, then the verbs of wishing, praying, cursing, and so on. Of all these he made lists and grouped them into little things called Tables of Relative Frequency, which, when completed, were about as interesting, about as useful, and about as easy to compile as the list of wholesale prices of sugar at New Orleans. Yet this man's thesis was admittedly the best in his year, and it was considered by his instructors that had he not died immediately after graduation, he would have lived to publish some of the most daring speculations on the genitive of value in Plautus that the world has ever seen.

I do not here mean to imply that all our scholars of this type die, or even that they ought to die, immediately after graduation. Many of them remain alive for years, though their utility has of course largely departed after their thesis is complete. Still they do and can remain alive. If kept in a dry atmosphere and not exposed to the light, they may remain in an almost perfect state of preservation for years after finishing their doctor's thesis. I remember once seeing a specimen of this kind enter into a country post-office store, get his letters, and make a few purchases, closely scrutinised by the rural occupants. When he had gone out the postmaster turned to a friend with the triumphant air of a man who has information in reserve and said, "Now wouldn't you think, to look at him, that man was a d——d fool?" "Certainly would," said the friend, slowly nodding his head. "Well, he isn't," said the postmaster emphatically; "he's a Doctor of Philosophy." But the distinction was too subtle for most of the auditors.

In passing these strictures upon our American system of higher education, I do not wish to be misunderstood. One must of course admit a certain amount of specialisation in study. It is quite reasonable that a young man with a particular aptitude or inclination towards modern languages, or classical literature, or political economy, should devote himself particularly to that field. But what I protest against is the idea that each of these studies is apt with us to be regarded as wholly exclusive

of the others, and that the moment a man becomes a student of German literature he should lose all interest in general history and philosophy, and be content to remain as ignorant of political economy or jurisprudence as a plumber. The price of liberty, it has been finely said, is eternal vigilance, and I think one may say that the price of real intellectual progress is eternal alertness, an increasing and growing interest in all great branches of human knowledge. Art is notoriously long and life is infamously short. We cannot know everything. But we can at least pursue the ideal of knowing the greatest things in all branches of knowledge, something at least of the great masters of literature, something of the best of the world's philosophy, and something of its political conduct and structure. It is but little that the student can ever know, but we can at least see that the little is wisely distributed.

And here perhaps it is necessary to make a further qualification to this antagonism of the principle of specialisation. I quite admit its force and purpose as applied to such things as natural science and medicine. These are branches capable of isolation from the humanities in general, and in them progress is not dependent on the width of general culture. Here it is necessary that a certain portion of the learned world should isolate themselves from mankind, immure themselves in laboratories, testing, dissecting, weighing, probing, boiling, mixing, and cooking to their heart's content. It is necessary for the world's work that they should do so. In any case this is real research work done by real specialists *after* their education and not *as* their education. Of this work the so-called researches of the graduate student, who spends three years in writing a thesis on John Milton's god-mother, is a mere parody.

Nor is it to be thought that this post-graduate work upon the preparation of a thesis, this so-called original scholarship is difficult. It is pretentious, plausible, esoteric, cryptographic, occult, if you will, but difficult it is not. It is of course laborious. It takes time. But the amount of intellect called for in the majority of these elaborate compilations is about the same, or rather less, than that involved in posting the day book in a village grocery. The larger part of it is on a level with the ordinary routine clerical duties performed by a young lady stenographer for ten dollars a week. One must also quite readily admit that just as there is false and real research, so too is there such a thing as a false and make-believe general education. Education, I allow, can be made so broad that it gets thin, so extensive that it must be shallow. The educated mind of this type becomes so wide that it appears quite flat. Such is the education of the drawing-room conversationalist. Thus a man may acquire no little reputation as a classical scholar by constant and casual reference to Plato or Diodorus Siculus without in reality having studied anything more arduous than the Home Study Circle of his weekly paper. Yet even such a man, pitiable

though he is, may perhaps be viewed with a more indulgent eye than the ossified specialist.

It is of course not to be denied that there is even in the field of the humanities a certain amount of investigation to be done—of research work, if one will—of a highly specialised character. But this is work that can best be done not by way of an educational training—for its effect is usually the reverse of educational, but as a special labour performed for its own sake as the life work of a trained scholar, not as the examination requirement of a prospective candidate. The pretentious claim made by so many of our universities that the thesis presented for the doctor's degree must represent a distinct contribution to human knowledge will not stand examination. Distinct contributions to human knowledge are not so easily nor so mechanically achieved. Nor should it be thought either that, even where an elaborate and painstaking piece of research has been carried on by a trained scholar, such an achievement should carry with it any recognition of a very high order. It is useful and meritorious no doubt, but the esteem in which it is held in the academic world in America indicates an entirely distorted point of view. Our American process of research has led to an absurd admiration of the mere collection of facts, extremely useful things in their way but in point of literary eminence standing in the same class as the Twelfth Census of the United States or the Statistical Abstract of the United Kingdom. So it has come to pass that the bulk of our college-made books are little more than collections of material out of which in the hands of a properly gifted person a book might be made. In our book-making in America—our serious book-making, I mean—the whole art of presentation, the thing that ought to be the very essence of literature, is sadly neglected. "A fact," as Lord Bryce once said in addressing the assembled historians of America, "is an excellent thing and you must have facts to write about; but you should realise that even a fact before it is ready for presentation must be cut and polished like a diamond." "You need not be afraid to be flippant," said the same eminent authority, "but you ought to have a horror of being dull." Unfortunately our American college-bred authors cannot be flippant if they try: it is at best but the lumbering playfulness of the elephant, humping his heavy posteriors in the air and wiggling his little tail in the vain attempt to be a lamb.

The head and front of the indictment thus presented against American scholarship is seen in its results. It is not making scholars in the highest sense of the term. It is not encouraging a true culture. It is not aiding in the creation of a real literature. The whole bias of it is contrary to the development of the highest intellectual power: it sets a man of genius to a drudging task suitable to the capacities of third-class clerk, substitutes the machine-made pedant for the man of letters, puts

a premium on painstaking dulness and breaks down genius, inspiration, and originality in the grinding routine of the college tread-mill. Here and there, as is only natural, conspicuous exceptions appear in the academic world of America. A New England professor has invested the dry subject of government with a charm that is only equalled by the masterly comprehensiveness of his treatment: a Massachusetts philosopher held for a lifetime the ear of the educated world, and an American professor has proved that even so abstruse a subject as the history of political philosophy can be presented in a form at once powerful and fascinating.

But even the existence of these brilliant exceptions to the general rule cannot invalidate the proposition that the effect of our American method upon the cycle of higher studies is depressing in the extreme. History is dwindling into fact lore and is becoming the science of the almanac; economics is being buried alive in statistics and is degenerating into the science of the census; literature is stifled by philology, and is little better than the science of the lexicographer.

Nor is it only in the higher ranges of education and book-making that the same abiding absence of general literary spirit is manifest in American life. For below, or at least parallel with the universities we have the equally notable case of our American newspapers and journals. In nearly all of these the art of writing is relegated entirely to the background. Our American newspapers and journals (with certain notable and honourable exceptions) are not written "upwards" (so to speak) as if seeking to attain the ideal of an elevated literary excellence, but "downward," so as to catch the ear and capture the money of the crowd. Here obtrudes himself the everlasting American man with the dinner pail, admirable as a political and industrial institution but despicable as the touch-stone of a national literature. Our newspapers must be written down to his level. Our poetry must be put in a form that he can understand. Our sonnets must be tuned to suit his ear. Our editorials must speak his own tongue. Otherwise he will not spend his magical one cent and our newspaper cannot circulate. Hence it is that the bulk of our current journalistic literature is strictly a one-cent literature. This is the situation that has evolved that weird being called the American Reporter, tireless in his activity, omnipresent, omnivorous, and omni-ignorant. He is out looking for facts, but of the art of presenting them with either accuracy or attraction he is completely innocent. He has just enough knowledge of shorthand to be able completely to mystify himself; and in deciphering his notes of events, speeches, and occurrences, to fall back upon his general education would be like falling back upon a cucumber frame.

I cannot do better to illustrate the amount of literary power possessed by the American reporter than to take an actual illustration or at any rate one that is as good

as actual. I will take a selection from President Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and will present it first as Lincoln is known to have written it, and secondly as the Washington reporters of the day are certain to have reported it. Here is the original: —"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may soon pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword; as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

Here is the reproduction of the above at the hands of the American reporter, piecing out his meagre knowledge of stenography by the use of his still more meagre literary ability: "Mr. Lincoln then spoke at some length upon the general subject of prayer. He said that prayer was fond and foolish, but that war would scourge it out. War was a nightly scourge. It would pile up two hundred and fifty million dollars of unpaid bonds. He recommended the lash as the most appropriate penalty, and concluded by expressing his opinion that the judgments of the Lord were altogether ridiculous."

The ultimate psychology of this decided absence of literary power in our general intellectual development would be difficult to appreciate. It may be that the methods adopted in our education are a consequence rather than a cause, and it may well be also that, even if our educative system is a contributory factor, other causes of great potency are operative at the same time. One of these no doubt is found in the distinct bias of our whole American life towards commercialism. The vastly greater number of us in America have always been under the shameful necessity of earning our own living. This has coloured all our thinking with the yellow tinge of the dollar. Social and intellectual values necessarily undergo a peculiar readjustment among a people to whom individually the "main chance" is necessarily everything. Thus it is that with us everything tends to find itself "upon a business basis." Organisation and business methods are obtruded everywhere. Public enthusiasm is replaced by the manufactured hysteria of the convention. The old-time college president, such as the one of Harvard who lifted up his voice in prayer in the twilight of a summer evening over the "rebels" that were to move on Bunker Hill that night, is replaced by the Modern Business President, alert and brutal in his methods, and himself living only on sufferance after the age of forty years. A good clergyman with us must be a hustler. The only missionary we care for is an advertiser, and even the undertaker must send us a Christmas calendar if he desires to retain our custom. Everything with us is "run" on business lines from a primary election to a prayer meeting. Thus

business, and the business code, and business principles become everything. Smartness is the quality most desired, pecuniary success the goal to be achieved. Hence all less tangible and provable forms of human merit, and less tangible aspirations of the human mind are rudely shouldered aside by business ability and commercial success. There follows the apotheosis of the business man. He is elevated to the post of national hero. His most stupid utterances are taken down by the American Reporter, through the prism of whose intellect they are refracted with a double brilliance and inscribed at large in the pages of the one-cent press. The man who organises a soap-and-glue company is called a nation builder; a person who can borrow enough money to launch a Distiller's Association is named an empire maker, and a man who remains in business until he is seventy-five without getting into the penitentiary is designated a Grand Old Man.

But it may well be that there is a reason for our literary inferiority lying deeper still than the commercial environment and the existence of an erroneous educational ideal, which are but things of the surface. It is possible that after all literature and progress-happiness-and-equality are antithetical terms. Certain it is that the world's greatest literature has arisen in the darkest hours of its history. More than one of the masterpieces of the past were written in a dungeon. It is perhaps conceivable that literature has arisen in the past mainly on the basis of the inequalities, the sufferings and the misery of the common lot that has led humanity to seek in the concepts of the imagination the happiness that seemed denied by the stern environment of reality. Thus perhaps American civilisation with its public school and the dead level of its elementary instruction, with its simple code of republicanism and its ignorance of the glamour and mystery of monarchy, with its bread and work for all and its universal hope of the betterment of personal fortune, contains in itself an atmosphere in which the flower of literature cannot live. It is at least conceivable that this flower blossoms most beautifully in the dark places of the world, among that complex of tyranny and heroism, of inexplicable cruelty and sublime suffering that is called history. Perhaps this literary sterility of America is but the mark of the new era that is to come not to America alone, but to the whole of our western civilisation; the era in which humanity, fed to satiety and housed and warmed to the point of somnolence, with its wars abolished and its cares removed, may find that it has lost from among it that supreme gift of literary inspiration which was the comforter of its darker ages.

IV.—American Humour

Essays upon American Humour, after an initial effort towards the dignity and severity of literary criticism, generally resolve themselves into the mere narration of American jokes and stories. The fun of these runs thinly towards its impotent conclusion, till the disillusioned reader detects behind the mask of the literary theorist the anxious grin of the second-hand story-teller. It is the aim of the present writer to effect something more than this, and to offer a contribution, however humble, to the theory of æsthetics, and a study of those national characteristics which are associated with the particular domain of the æsthetics in question.

The following essay is therefore intended to present a serious analysis of American humour as an art, and to discuss its relation to the character and history of the people among whom it has originated. In such a discussion it may well become necessary to introduce an actual citation of typical American jokes: but, where this is the case, it is done only in the interests of art, and with a proper sense of responsibility.

This is a somewhat venturesome task, and one for which the limits of the present essay are all too brief. The æsthetic theory of the humorous has been but little exploited, and never satisfactorily explained. It offers an open field for the talents of a future philosopher, or psychologist, who shall confine himself exclusively to the comic, and set up for us by his analysis the long-needed criterion of what is, and what is not, amusing. The philosopher who will do this for the domain of mirth will not only benefit the theory of æsthetics, but may incidentally shed upon his own province a not unpleasing illumination.

It is not to be implied from this that none of the world's great philosophers, such as Kant, and Schopenhauer, have dealt with the analysis of humour. Several of them have done so, and have done so in a spirit which does them credit. Schopenhauer has told us—I cannot quote his phrase exactly but merely give the rough, every-day sense of his words—that all those concepts are amusing in which there is the subsumption of a double paradox. This is a proposition which none of us will readily deny, and one which, if more widely appreciated, might prove of the highest practical utility. Kant, likewise, has said that in him everything excites laughter in which there is a resolution or deliverance of the absolute captive by the finite. It was very honourable of Kant to admit this. It enables us to know exactly what did, and what did not, excite him. But the difficulty remains that the philosophical school of analysts, in their fear of being thought light, frivolous, or over-intelligible in dealing

with this subject have been led to envelop themselves in a thick haze of psychological terminology which the common eye is unable to pierce. The explanation of the humorous proceeds thus *ad obscurum per obscurius*. The presentation in simple language for simple people of a true theory of the ludicrous has yet to be made.

It is perhaps not difficult to understand why so few writers have attempted a painstaking and scientific analysis of what is humorous. There appears to be a sort of intellectual indignity involved in the serious study of the comic.

Catullus said long ago that "nothing is more foolish than a foolish laugh," and a recent French psychologist has added that "laughter is often an excellent symptom of intellectual poverty." It follows, therefore, that any man of attainment is unwilling that his name should be unduly associated with the seemingly lighter side of intellectual life. He does not deny his own appreciation of the humorous. Indeed, by a strange inconsistency he shows himself highly sensitive in regard to it. Of his other faculties he is willing to admit the limitations. He is willing to make efforts to cultivate them. But his appreciation of humour he regards as a natural endowment, perfect in its degree, and needing no further cultivation. He even affects to consider the professional, or notorious humorist, with a kindly condescension, not unmixed with contempt. "There are obvious reasons," says Oliver Wendell Holmes, "why all reputable authors are ashamed of being funny. The clown knows very well that the women are not in love with him, but with Hamlet, the gloomy fellow yonder in the black coat and the plumed hat. The wit knows that his place is at the tail of the procession."

The initial task, then, of explaining the general nature of humour is difficult enough. But, even if this task were successfully accomplished, there remains the further difficulty of rightly explaining the essential nature of American humour. For this term does not necessarily apply to all humorous writings produced in the United States. The expression is not a geographical one, but ought to indicate certain dominant qualities, modes of thought and expression which mark off a distinctive literary product.

Even from this preliminary survey of the ground before us it can be seen that the subject under discussion is of no mean importance. Still further is its importance enhanced when one realises the peculiar position occupied by American humour in the general body of American literature.

In the preceding essay the discussion turned upon the relatively small output of literature of the highest class upon the continent of America. Wonderful as our civilisation is on its material and practical side, it falls short as yet, in regard to

literature and general culture, of the standard of the great nations of Europe. But in this relative literary sterility there has been one salient exception, and this exception has been found in the province of humorous writing. Here at any rate American history, and American life, have continuously reflected themselves in a not unworthy literary product. The humorist has followed, and depicted, the progress of our western civilisation at every step. Benjamin Franklin has shewn us the humour of Yankee commercialism, and Pennsylvanian piety—the odd resultant of the juxtaposition of saintliness and common sense. Irving has developed the humour of early Dutch settlement—the mynheers of the Hudson valley, with their long pipes and leisurely routine; Hawthorne presents the mingled humour and pathos of Puritanism; Hans Breitmann sings the ballad of the later Teuton; Lowell, the Mexican war, and the Slavery contest; Oliver Wendell Holmes, the softer side of the rigid culture of Boston; Mark Twain and Bret Harte bring with them the new vigour of the West; and, at the close of the tale, the sagacious Mr. Dooley appears as the essayist of the Irish immigrant, while a brilliant group of "up-to-date" writers—the Ades, the Adamses and the Irwins of our contemporary journalism—boldly challenge comparison with their predecessors. No very lofty literature is this perhaps, yet faithful and real of its kind, more truly and distinctively American than anything else produced upon the continent.

All of this has been said but as a somewhat overbalanced introduction. Let me now invite my readers to take with me a sudden plunge into the uttermost psychology of the subject, comparable, I fear, in its recklessness with that taken of old time down a steep place into the sea.

The basis of the humorous, the amusing, the ludicrous, lies in the incongruity, the unfittingness, the want of harmony among things; and this incongruity, according to the various stages of evolution of human society and of the art of speech, may appear in primitive form, or may assume a more complex manifestation. The crudest and most primitive form of all "disharmonies" is that offered by the aspect of something smashed, broken, defeated, knocked out of its original shape and purpose. Hence it is that Hobbes tells us that the prototype of human amusement is found in the exulting laugh of the savage over his fallen foe whose head he has cracked with a club. This represents the very origin and fountain source of laughter. "The passion of laughter," says Hobbes, "springs from a sudden glory arising from a conception of some eminence in ourselves, as compared with the misfortunes of others." It seems but a sad commentary upon the history of humanity to think that the original basis of our amusement should appear in the form which is called demoniacal merriment. But there is much to support the view. "The pleasure of the ludicrous,"

says Plato, "originates in the sight of another's misfortune." Nay, we have but to consider the cruder forms of humour even among civilised people to realise that the original type still persists. The laughter of a street urchin at the sight of a fat gentleman slipping on a banana peel, the amusement of a child in knocking down ninepins, or demolishing a snow man, the joy of a school boy in breaking window panes—all such cases indicate the principle of original demoniacal amusement at work.

Even in reputable modern literature we can find innumerable examples of merriment of the lower type created in this fashion. We are all familiar with Bret Harte's poem about the circumstances which terminated the existence of the literary society formed at the mining camp of Stanislow. The verse in which the fun of the poem culminates runs:

> Then Abner Dean, of Angels, raised a point of order, when
> A chunk of old red sandstone hit him in the abdomen,
> And he smiled a kind of sickly smile, and curled up on the floor,
> And the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

Now this humour of discomfiture, of destructiveness and savage triumph may be expected to appear not only among a primitive people, but also in any case where the settlement of a new country reproduces to some extent the circumstances of primitive life. One can therefore readily understand that it enters freely into the composition of the humour of American western life. The humour of the Arkansas mule, of the bucking broncho, of the Kentucky duel, is all of this primitive character. Mark Twain's earlier and shorter sketches contain much material of this sort. An excellent illustration of it is found in the essay called "Journalism in Tennessee." The following extract therefrom, a little abbreviated for the sake of condensation, may be offered in citation:

The Editor of the Johnson County *Warwhoop* was dictating an article (to Mark Twain, the Associate Editor) on the Encouraging Progress of Moral and Intellectual Development in America, when, in the midst of his work, somebody shot at him through the open window and marred the symmetry of his ear. "Ah," he said, "that is that scoundrel, Smith, of the *Moral Volcano*; he was due yesterday." He snatched a navy revolver from his belt, and fired. Smith dropped, shot in the thigh. The Editor went on with his dictation. Just as he finished a hand grenade came down the stove pipe, and the explosion shattered the stove into a thousand fragments. However, it did no other damage than to knock out a couple of my teeth. Shortly after, a brick came through the window, and gave me a considerable jolt in the back. The chief

said: "That was the colonel, likely." A moment after, the colonel appeared in the doorway with a dragoon revolver in his hand. "I have a little account to settle with you," he said: "if you are at leisure we will begin." Both pistols rang out at the same moment. The chief lost a lock of his hair, and the colonel's bullet ended its career in my thigh. The colonel's left shoulder was chipped a little. They fired again. Both missed their men this time, but I got my share, a shot in the arm. I said I believed I would go out and take a walk as this was a private interview. Both gentlemen begged me to keep my seat.

It will of course be readily seen that the humorous quality of the above is of a mixed character, but the discomfiture of the associate editor enters largely into it.

Now, this primitive form of fun is of a decidedly anti-social character. It runs counter to other instincts, those of affection, pity, unselfishness, upon which the progressive development of the race has largely depended. As a consequence of this, the basis of humour tends in the course of social evolution to alter its original character. It becomes a condition of amusement that no serious harm or injury shall be inflicted, but that only the appearance or simulation of it shall appear. Indeed Plato himself adds, as a proviso to the definition which I have quoted above, that the misfortune which excites mirth in question must involve no serious harm. Hence it comes about that the sight of a humped back, or a crooked foot, is droll only to the mind of a savage or a child; while the queer gyrations of a person whose foot has gone to sleep, and who tries in vain to walk, may excite laughter in the civilised adult by affording the appearance of crooked limbs without the reality. This is perhaps what Kant meant by the resolution of the absolute. On the other hand, perhaps it is not.

When the development of humour reaches this stage its basis is shifted from the appearance of destructiveness and demolition to that of the *incongruous*. Man's advancing view of what is harmonious, purposeful and properly adjusted to its surroundings begins to cause him a sense of intellectual superiority, a tickling of amused vanity at the sight of that which misses its mark, which betrays a maladjustment of means to end, a departure from the proper type of things. The idea of contrast, incongruity, of the false semblance between the correct and the incorrect, becomes the basic principle of the ludicrous.

To this stage of the development of the ludicrous belongs the amusement one feels at the sight of a juggler swallowing yards of tape, or of a circus clown wearing a little round hat the size of a pill-box.

Much of the humour of the farce and the pantomime, the transformation scene of the musical comedy, and the medley of the circus ring is of this class. Just why such

appearances should excite *laughter*, why the sense of pleasure experienced should manifest itself in certain muscular movements, is a physiological, and not a psychological problem. Herbert Spencer tells us that the thing called a laugh is a sort of explosion of nervous energy, disappointed in its expected path, and therefore attacking the muscles of the face. Admirers of Spencer's scientific method may find in this plausible statement a pleasing finality, though why the explosion in question should attack the face rather than other parts of the body still seems a matter of doubt.

To this secondary stage of development is to be assigned the first appearance of the mode of humour called wit. Wit depends upon a contrast or incongruity effected by calling in the art of words. "It is," says Professor Bain, "a sudden and unexpected form of humour, involving a play upon words." "Wit," writes Walter Pater, "is that unreal and transitory form of mirth, which is like the crackling of thorns under a pot." "It consists," says another modern authority, Mr. Lilly, "in the discoveries of incongruities in the province of the understanding." If the view here presented be correct, wit is properly to be regarded not as something contrasted with the humorous but offering merely a special and, relatively speaking, unimportant subdivision of a general mode of intellectual operation: it presents a humorous idea by means of the happy juxtaposition of verbal forms.

Now this principle of intellectual pleasure excited by contrast or incongruity, once started on an upward path of development, loses more and more its anti-social character, until at length it appears no longer antagonistic to the social feelings, but contributory to them. The final stage of the development of humour is reached when amusement no longer arises from a single "funny" idea, meaningless contrast, or odd play upon words, but rests upon a prolonged and sustained conception of the incongruities of human life itself. The shortcomings of our existence, the sad contrast of our aims and our achievements, the little fretting aspiration of the day that fades into the nothingness of tomorrow, kindle in the mellowed mind a sense of gentle amusement from which all selfish exultation has been chastened by the realisation of our common lot of sorrow. On this higher plane humour and pathos mingle and become one. To the Creator perhaps in retrospect the little story of man's creation and his fall seems sadly droll.

It is of this final stage of the evolution of amusement that one of the keenest of modern analysts has written thus,—"when men become too sympathetic to laugh at each other for individual defects or infirmities which once moved their mirth, it is surely not strange that sympathy should then begin to unite them, not in common lamentation for their common defects and inferiorities, but in common amusement at

them." This is the sentiment that has inspired the great masterpieces of humorous literature—this is the humour of Cervantes smiling sadly at the passing of the older chivalry, and of Hawthorne depicting the sombre melancholies of Puritanism against the background of the silent woods of New England. This is the really great humour —unquotable in single phrases and paragraphs, but producing its effect in a long-drawn picture of human life, in which the universal element of human imperfection—alike in all ages and places—excites at once our laughter and our tears.

From this general settling of the subject let me turn to the more immediate consideration of American humour as such, and inquire what special sources of contrast and incongruity, what particular modes of thought and expression might well be engendered in American life, and reflected in American writing. Perhaps the most evident, and the most far-reaching, factor in the question is the circumstance that we Americans are a new people, divorced from the traditions, good and bad, of European life, and are able thereby to take a highly objective view of European ideas and institutions. Our freedom from the hereditary and conventional view has enabled our writers to take an "outside" view of things, and to discover many contrasts and incongruities hidden from the European eye. We have been able to view the older civilisation from a distance, and to judge it on its merits. The objective view—the deliberate insistence in judging things as they are, and not as hallowed tradition interprets them—forms the essential "idea" of much of what is considered typically Yankee humour. It is one of the leading qualities in the humour of Franklin's Poor Richard, of Major Downing, of Sam Slick and of Hosea Biglow. It is connected essentially with the development of Yankee character, and of the Yankee view of the outside world. "A strange hybrid indeed," said an English writer half a century ago, "did circumstance beget in the new world upon the old Puritan stock, and the earth never before saw such mystic practicalism, such niggard geniality, such calculating fanaticism, such castiron enthusiasm, such sour-faced humour, such close-fisted generosity."

This peculiar vein of Yankee character has nowhere been better exploited for purposes of humour than in James Russell Lowell's *Biglow Papers*. Here we have New England wisdom detached from the conventional view of things; how complete and surprising this detachment may sometimes appear is seen in the poem on the Mexican war, intended as a protest against the rampant militarism of the Southern expansionists, in which occurs the following verse:

We were getting on nicely up here to our village,
With good old idees o' wut's right and wut ain't,
We kind o' thought Christ went again' war an' pillage,
An' that eppylettes worn't the best mark of a saint.
But John P.
Robinson, he
Sez this kind o' thing's an exploded idee.

A great deal of Mark Twain's humour rests upon a similar basis. The humorous contrast is found by turning the "artistic innocence" of the western eye to bear upon the civilisation of the old world. The result is amply seen in those two most amusing of American books, *The Innocents Abroad* and the *New Pilgrims' Progress*. A few words from a preface written by Mr. Hingston for an English edition of the "Innocents" admirably develop the fundamental basis of the contrast here utilised as a source of humour.

> "From the windows of the newspaper office where Mark Twain worked (the office of the *Territorial Enterprise*, of Virginia City, Nevada) the American desert was visible: within a radius of ten miles Indians were encamped among the sage bush: the whole city was populated with miners, adventurers, traders, gamblers and that rough-and-tumble class which a mining town in a new territory collects together. He visited Europe and Asia without any of the preparations for travel which most travellers undertake. His object was to see things as they are and record the impressions they produced upon a man of humorous perception, who paid his first visit to Europe without a travelling tutor, a university education or a stock of conventional sentimentality packed in a carpet bag. He looked at objects as an untravelled American might be expected to look, and measured men and manners by the gauge he had set up for himself among the goldhills of California and the silver mines of half-civilised Nevada."

It will be understood that a humorist enjoying the special advantage of so profound an ignorance was in a position to make amazing discoveries. I regret that the limited space at my disposal prevents an elaborate citation from Mark Twain's descriptions of Europe. But perhaps his reflections upon the old masters and their works in the picture galleries of Italy may serve as an illustration:

"The originals," he writes, "were handsome when they were new, but they are not new now. The colours are dim with age; the countenances are scaled and marred and nearly all expression is gone from them; the hair is a dead blur upon the wall. There is no life in the eyes. But humble as I am and unpretending in the matter of Art, my researches among the painted monks and martyrs have not been wholly in vain. I have striven hard to learn. I have had some success. I have mastered some things, possibly of trifling import in the eyes of the learned but to me they give pleasure and I take as much pride in my little acquirements as do others who have learned far more and who love to display them fully as well. When I see a monk going about with a lion and looking tranquilly up to heaven, I know that that is Saint Mark. When I see a monk with a book and a pen, looking tranquilly up to heaven and trying to think of a word, I know that that is Saint Matthew. When I see a monk sitting on a rock, looking tranquilly up to heaven with a human skull beside him and without any other baggage, I know that it is St. Jerome. When I see other monks looking tranquilly up to heaven but having no trademark, I always ask who these parties are. I do this because I humbly wish to learn. I have seen thirteen thousand St. Jeromes, twenty-two thousand St. Marks, sixteen thousand St. Matthews and sixty thousand St. Sebastians, together with four million of assorted monks undesignated, and I feel encouraged to believe that when I have seen some more of these various pictures and had a larger experience I shall begin to take a more absorbing interest in them."

As a subdivision of this Yankee humour which finds its starting point in the unprejudiced wisdom of the detached mind, is to be reckoned another mode of literary expression characteristic of the New England cast of thought. This is the production of a humorous effect by the affectation of a deep simplicity, a literary quality which perhaps had its root in the shrewdness in bargain-driving, highly cultivated among a people pious but pecuniary. No one was a greater master of this style than Artemus Ward. Ward was perhaps a comedian rather than a humorist. His early death prevented his leaving any great literary legacy to the world, but his lectures in New York and London of fifty years ago are still held in kindly recollection. It was his custom to appear upon the platform in what seemed a deep and embarrassed sadness; to apologise in a foolish and hesitating manner for the miserable little "panorama" lighted with wax candles which was supposed to offer

the material of his lecture; to regret that the moon in the panorama was out of place; then in a shamefaced way to commence a rambling "Lecture upon Africa" in which, by a sort of inadvertence, nothing was said of Africa till the concluding sentence, when with a kind of idiotic enthusiasm which he knew so well how to simulate, he earnestly recommended his audience to buy maps of Africa, and study them. The following little speech made in explanation of his panorama may be taken as typical of his style:

> "This picture," he used to say, "is a great work of art; it is an oil painting done in petroleum. It is by the Old Masters. It was the last thing they did before dying. They did this, and then they expired. I wish you were nearer to it so that you could see it better. I wish I could take it to your residences, and let you see it by daylight. Some of the greatest artists in London come here every morning before daylight with lanterns to look at it. They say they never saw anything like it before, and they hope they never shall again."

Somewhat similar in conception is the willful simplicity of his statement,—"I was born in Massachusetts, but I think I must have been descended from an old Persian family, as my elder brother was called Cyrus." On one occasion he startled a London audience by beginning his lecture with the words, "Those of you who have been in Newgate,"—the audience broke into laughter; Ward looked at them in reproach and added—"and have stayed there for any considerable time." Of a cognate character is the ultra-simple announcement which he printed at the foot of his lecture programme: "Mr. Artemus Ward must refuse to be responsible for any debts of his own contraction."

Among more modern writers Mr. Edgar Wilson Nye has fully availed himself of this truly American principle of the deliberate assumption of simplicity. The episode of his visit to the Navy Yard in the days before Mr. Roosevelt, when the American Navy was a proper target of national scorn, is a fine example of a humorously wilful misconception of the purpose of things:

> "The condition of our navy," says Mr. Nye, "need not give rise to any serious apprehension. The yard in which it is placed at Brooklyn is enclosed by a high brick wall affording it ample protection. A man on board the *Atlanta* at anchor at Brooklyn is quite as safe as he would be at home. The guns on board the *Atlanta* are breech loaders; this is a

great improvement on the old-style gun, because in former times in case of a naval combat, the man who went outside the ship to load the gun, while it was raining, frequently contracted pneumonia."

But let us return from the humour of simplicity to the main form of Yankee humour of which it is a part, the humour based on that freedom from traditional ideas and conventional views, characteristic of a new country. It will readily be perceived that, unless sustained and held in check by the presence at its side of an elevated national literature, this form of writing easily degenerates. Freedom from convention runs into crudity and coarseness; and a tone of cheap vulgarity is introduced calculated to discredit grievously the literature to which it belongs. It is unfortunate that even the work of the best American humorists is disfigured in this way. It would be offensive here to cite in detail such conspicuous examples as the account of the Turkish bath in the *Pilgrims' Progress*. An excellent example of what is meant is offered by Mark Twain's *Cannibalism in the Cars*. In this little sketch the vein of real humour may be obscured in the minds of many readers by the gruesomeness of the setting. I cite a part of it, not to excite laughter, but to illustrate the point under discussion. The story is that of a number of Congressmen, snowed in, in a railway train, and after a week of confinement, driven by hunger to the awful extremity of choosing one of their number to die that the rest may live. The fun of the piece is supposed to lie in the contrast offered by the awful circumstances of the event, and the formal legislative procedure which the Congressmen, trained in American politics, apply to the case from sheer force of habit.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Richard H. Gaston, of Minnesota, "it can be delayed no longer. We must determine which of us shall die to furnish food for the rest."

Mr. John S. Williams, of Illinois, rose and said, "Gentlemen, I nominate the Reverend Jas. Sawyer, of Tennessee."

Mr. Wm. R. Adams, of Indiana, said, "I nominate Mr. Daniel Slote, of New York."

Mr. Slote: "Gentlemen, I decline in favour of Mr. John A. Van Nastrand, of New Jersey."

Mr. Van Nastrand: "Gentlemen, I am a stranger among you, I have not sought the distinction that has been conferred upon me, and I feel a delicacy——"

Mr. Morgan, of Alabama (interrupting): "I move the previous

question." The motion was carried. A recess of half an hour was then taken, after which Mr. Roger, of Missouri, said:

"Mr. President, I move to amend the motion by striking out the name of the Rev. Mr. Sawyer, and substituting that of Mr. Lucius Harris, of St. Louis, who is well and honourably known to us all. I do not wish to be understood as casting the least reflection upon the higher character and standing of Mr. Sawyer. I respect and esteem him as much as any gentleman here: but none of us can be blind to the fact that he has lost more flesh during the week that we have lain here than any of us."

The Chairman: "What action will the house take upon the gentleman's motion?"

Mr. Halliday, of Virginia: "I move to amend the report by further substituting the name of Mr. Harvey Davis of Oregon. It may be urged, gentlemen, that the hardships and privations of a frontier life have rendered Mr. Davis tough. But, gentlemen, is this a time to cavil at toughness? No, gentlemen, bulk is what we desire,—substance, weight, bulk,—these are the supreme requisites now—not latent genius or education."

The amendment was put to the vote and lost. Rev. Mr. Sawyer was declared elected. The announcement created considerable dissatisfaction among the friends of Mr. Harvey Davis, the defeated candidate, and there was some talk of demanding a new ballot, but the preparations for supper diverted the attention of the Harvey Davis faction, and the happy announcement that Mr. Sawyer was ready presently drove all animosity to the winds.

We sat down with hearts full of gratitude to the finest supper that had blessed our vision for seven days. I liked Sawyer. He might have been better done perhaps, but he was worthy of all praise. I wrote his wife so afterwards. Next morning we had Morgan of Alabama for breakfast. He was one of the finest men I sat down to—handsome, educated, refined, spoke several languages fluently—a perfect gentleman.

Enough, I think, has been quoted to illustrate my meaning and I spare my readers the references to "soup," to "juiciness" and to "flavour," in which the subsequent part of the article abounds.

Let us pass on to consider another broad division of American humour, the Humour of Exaggeration. It is not to be supposed that we Americans hold any

monopoly of this mode of merriment. It is at least as old as Herodotus, whose efforts deserve all the credit attached to a praiseworthy beginning. Nay, even before Herodotus we find the humour of monstrous exaggeration fully exploited in the primitive literature of Norway. "The great giant of the Eddas," says one of the Sagas, "sits at the end of the world in Eagle's shape, and when he flaps his wings all the winds come that blow upon man." The suggested parallel to the American eagle is too obvious, and I pass it by. It is at least supposable that this element of exaggeration entered largely into all primitive folk song: it is likely that many passages in Homer, and the Ancients, which to the scholars of the day are mere misstatements of ignorance were greeted in their time by the loud guffaws of barbarian listeners.

But though there is no monopoly of exaggeration in America, the circumstances of our country and its growth tend to foster it as a national characteristic. The amazing rapidity of American progress, and the very bigness of our continent, has bred in us a corresponding bigness of speech; the fresh air of the western country, and the joy of living in the open, has inspired us with a sheer exuberant love of lying that has set its mark upon our literature. Examples of the literary quality thereby inspired might be quoted in hundreds, but one or two must suffice. An old American newspaper of the year 1850 at once illustrates and satirises this mode of national thought thus:

> "This is a glorious country. It has longer rivers and more of them, and they are muddier and deeper and run faster, and rise higher and make more noise and fall lower and do more damage than anybody else's rivers. It has more lakes and they are bigger and deeper and clearer and wetter than those of any other country. Our railway cars are bigger and run faster and pitch off the track oftener, and kill more people than all other railway cars in any other country. Our steamboats carry bigger loads, are longer and broader, burst their boilers oftener and send up their passengers higher, and the captains swear harder than the captains in any other country. Our men are bigger and longer and thicker; can fight harder and faster, drink more mean whiskey, chew more bad tobacco than in every other country."

A beautiful illustration of the same vein, not altogether unconscious, is found in Daniel Webster's speech to the citizens of Rochester:

"Men of Rochester, I am glad to see you. I am glad to see your noble city. Gentlemen, I saw your falls which I am told are one hundred and fifty feet high. This is a very interesting fact. Gentlemen, Rome had her Cæsar, her Scipio, her Brutus, but Rome in her proudest days had never a waterfall a hundred and fifty feet high. Gentlemen, Greece had her Pericles, her Demosthenes and her Socrates, but Greece in her palmiest days had never a waterfall a hundred and fifty feet high. *Men of Rochester, go on.*"

It is notorious that this form of American fun has always proved somewhat difficult of comprehension to our British cousins. "I was prepared," said Artemus Ward in speaking of one of his English audiences, "for a good deal of gloom, but I did not expect to find them so completely depressed." It is interesting to note that the Right Hon. John Bright, one of the auditors of the lecture, said next morning: "The information is meagre and is presented in a desultory manner: indeed I cannot help questioning some of the statements."

This divergence of national taste is really fundamental in British and American art and literature, and it forms the line of division between the British and American conception of a joke. The Englishman loves what is literal. His conception of a "funny picture" is the drawing of a trivial accident in a hunting field, depicting exactly everything as it happened, with the discomfited horseman dripping with water from having fallen into a stream; or covered with mud by being thrown into a bog. The American funny picture tries to convey the same ideas by exaggeration. It gives us negroes with boots that are two feet long, collars six inches high and diamonds that shoot streaks of light across the paper. The English cartoonist makes a literal drawing. He may draw Mr. Winston Churchill as a chimney sweep or a nurse-girl or as a bull-terrier but the face is always the face of Mr. Winston Churchill. The American cartoonist on the contrary reduces Mr. Roosevelt to a set of teeth with spectacles, Sir Wilfred Laurier to a lock of hair, and the German Kaiser to a pair of moustaches. In either case the object sought may be attained or missed. British literalism in comic art or literature easily fades into insipid dullness; pointless stories of "awfully amusing things," told just as they happened, make one long for the sound of a literary lie. American exaggeration in comic art runs to seed in the wooden symbolism that depicts a skating accident by a series of concentric circles. American exaggeration in literature passes the bounds of common-sense, and becomes mere meaningless criminality.

At this point it may be in order to consider the question of especially American

forms of wit. These are certainly not abundant. "We have not yet had time," said Josh Billings, "to boil down our humour, and get the wit out of it." There are nevertheless certain forms and modes of wit typically American. Most notable of these is what may be called the Unrestrained Simile, a form closely analogous to humorous exaggeration:

> "This miserable man," writes a western editor in describing in terms of scorn the personal appearance of one of his rivals, "has a pair of legs that look like twenty-five minutes after six." "Rats are about as uncalled for," says Josh Billings, "as a pain in the small of the back." "There must be 60 or 70 million rats in the United States. Of course I am speaking only from memory."

Not unfrequently these forced comparisons become overforced and miss their mark. Witness the following:

> "The effeminate man," says Josh Billings, "is a weak poultiss. He is a cross between root beer and gingerpop with the cork left out of the bottle overnight. He is a fresh water mermaid lost in a cow pasture with his hands filled with dandylions. He is a sick monkey with a blonde mustash. He is as harmless as a cent's worth of spruce gum and as useless as a shirt button without a button hole. He is as lazy as a bread pill, and has no more hope than a last year's grass-hopper."

Another special form of American wit is found in the use of ellipsis, as if from ignorance or simplicity. A charming example of this is seen in a well known telegram sent by, or declared to have been sent by, Mark Twain: "Elephant broke loose from circus to-day. Rushed madly at two plumbers. It killed one. The other escaped. General regret." Closely similar is the mode of speech of which the following quotation from Eli Perkins is an example: "An old Maine woman undertook to eat a gallon of oysters for one hundred dollars. She gained fifteen, her funeral costing eighty-five."

The special forms of American wit offered by the various dialects constitute a chapter by themselves, but of these the most typical is offered by the negro misuse of words, a mode of wit fully exploited by the author of Uncle Remus and the Southern school:

> "Julius, is yo' better dis morning?" "No, I was better yesterday, but

> I'se got ober dat." "Am dere no hopes of yo' discobery?" "Discobery of what?" "Discobery from the convalescence what am fetching you on yo'r back." "That depends, sah, altogether on the prognostication which implies the disease; should they continue fatally he hopes dis culled individual won't die dis time. But as I said afore, dat all depends on the prognotics: till dese come to a haid, dere am no telling whether dis pusson will come to a discontinuation or otherwise."

In any literature the forms of wit run easily to degeneration into sterile mechanical forms. There is an inevitable tendency to confound what is difficult with what is amusing. The sillier of the mediæval monks found amusement in anagrams, acrostics, and double-ended Latin lines which read as foolishly backwards as forwards. The sillier amongst the English people take an infantile delight in puns. The corresponding curse of American humour is bad spelling. Bad spelling, as Lowell has said, is only amusing when it has some ulterior allusion or reference. Josh Billings' naif statement —"I spell kaughphy, k-a-u-g-h-p-h-y, and Webster spells it coffee, but I don't know which of us is right"—may be allowed to pass, but in the majority of cases bad spelling is utterly without point and contains no element of the comic. It is cheering to realise that the efforts of the spelling reform society will henceforth make bad spelling a serious matter.

It has been impossible in this short compass to say much of the part of American literature which moves upon the highest plane of humour, in which the mere incongruous "funniness" of the ludicrous is replaced by the larger view of life. In plain truth not much of what is called American humour is of this class. The writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the works of Mark Twain (not as cited in single passages or jokes, but considered in their broad aspect, and in their view of life), and, perhaps more than all, the work of O. Henry, whose name will stand in retrospect among the greatest, present the universal element. But a large part of American humour lacks profundity, and wants that stimulating aid of the art of expression which can be found only amongst a literary people. The Americans produce humorous writing because of their intensely humorous perception of things, and in despite of the fact that they are not a literary people. The British people, essentially a people of exceptions, produce a high form of humorous literature because of their literary spirit, and in spite of the fact that their general standard of humorous perception is lower. In the one case humour forces literature. In the other literature forces humour.

One is tempted in such an essay as the present to conclude with a discussion of the writers of the immediate moment. But discretion forbids. Criticism is only of

value where the lapse of a certain time lends perspective to the view. Of the brilliance and promise of a number of the younger humorists of to-day there can be no doubt. But it is difficult to appraise their work and to distinguish among a mass of transitory effects the elements of abiding value.

V.—The Woman Question

I was sitting the other day in what is called the Peacock Alley of one of our leading hotels, drinking tea with another thing like myself, a man. At the next table were a group of Superior Beings in silk, talking. I couldn't help overhearing what they said—at least not when I held my head a little sideways.

They were speaking of the war.

"There wouldn't have been any war," said one, "if women were allowed to vote."

"No, indeed," chorused all the others.

The woman who had spoken looked about her defiantly. She wore spectacles and was of the type that we men used to call, in days when we still retained a little courage, an Awful Woman.

"When women have the vote," she went on, "there will be no more war. The women will forbid it."

She gazed about her angrily. She evidently wanted to be heard. My friend and I hid ourselves behind a little fern and trembled.

But we listened. We were hoping that the Awful Woman would explain how war would be ended. She didn't. She went on to explain instead that when women have the vote there will be no more poverty, no disease, no germs, no cigarette smoking and nothing to drink but water.

It seemed a gloomy world.

"Come," whispered my friend, "this is no place for us. Let us go to the bar."

"No," I said, "leave me. I am going to write an article on the Woman Question. The time has come when it has got to be taken up and solved."

So I set myself to write it.

The woman problem may be stated somewhat after this fashion. The great majority of the women of to-day find themselves without any means of support of their own. I refer of course to the civilised white women. The gay savage in her jungle, attired in a cocoanut leaf, armed with a club and adorned with the neck of a soda-water bottle, is all right. Trouble hasn't reached her yet. Like all savages, she has a far better time,—more varied, more interesting, more worthy of a human being,—than falls to the lot of the rank and file of civilised men and women. Very few of us recognise this great truth. We have a mean little vanity over our civilisation. We are touchy about it. We do not realise that so far we have done little but increase the burden of work and multiply the means of death. But for the hope of better things

to come, our civilisation would not seem worth while.

But this is a digression. Let us go back. The great majority of women have no means of support of their own. This is true also of men. But the men can acquire means of support. They can hire themselves out and work. Better still, by the industrious process of intrigue rightly called "busyness," or business, they may presently get hold of enough of other people's things to live without working. Or again, men can, with a fair prospect of success, enter the criminal class, either in its lower ranks as a house breaker, or in its upper ranks, through politics. Take it all in all a man has a certain chance to get along in life.

A woman, on the other hand, has little or none. The world's work is open to her, but she cannot do it. She lacks the physical strength for laying bricks or digging coal. If put to work on a steel beam a hundred feet above the ground, she would fall off. For the pursuit of business her head is all wrong. Figures confuse her. She lacks sustained attention and in point of morals the average woman is, even for business, too crooked.

This last point is one that will merit a little emphasis. Men are queer creatures. They are able to set up a code of rules or a standard, often quite an artificial one, and stick to it. They have acquired the art of playing the game. Eleven men can put on white flannel trousers and call themselves a cricket team, on which an entirely new set of obligations, almost a new set of personalities, are wrapped about them. Women could never be a team of anything.

So it is in business. Men are able to maintain a sort of rough and ready code which prescribes the particular amount of cheating that a man may do under the rules. This is called business honesty, and many men adhere to it with a dog-like tenacity, growing old in it, till it is stamped on their grizzled faces, visibly. They can feel it inside them like a virtue. So much will they cheat and no more. Hence men are able to trust one another, knowing the exact degree of dishonesty they are entitled to expect.

With women it is entirely different. They bring to business an unimpaired vision. They see it as it is. It would be impossible to trust them. They refuse to play fair.

Thus it comes about that woman is excluded, to a great extent, from the world's work and the world's pay.

There is nothing really open to her except one thing,—marriage. She must find a man who will be willing, in return for her society, to give her half of everything he has, allow her the sole use of his house during the daytime, pay her taxes, and provide her clothes.

This was, formerly and for many centuries, not such a bad solution of the

question. The women did fairly well out of it. It was the habit to marry early and often. The "house and home" was an important place. The great majority of people, high and low, lived on the land. The work of the wife and the work of the husband ran closely together. The two were complementary and fitted into one another. A woman who had to superintend the baking of bread and the brewing of beer, the spinning of yarn and the weaving of clothes, could not complain that her life was incomplete.

Then came the modern age, beginning let us say about a hundred and fifty years ago. The distinguishing marks of it have been machinery and the modern city. The age of invention swept the people off the land. It herded them into factories, creating out of each man a poor miserable atom divorced from hereditary ties, with no rights, no duties, and no place in the world except what his wages contract may confer on him. Every man for himself, and sink or swim, became the order of the day. It was nicknamed "industrial freedom." The world's production increased enormously. It is doubtful if the poor profited much. They obtained the modern city,—full of light and noise and excitement, lively with crime and gay with politics,—and the free school where they learned to read and write, by which means they might hold a mirror to their poverty and take a good look at it. They lost the quiet of the country side, the murmur of the brook and the inspiration of the open sky. These are unconscious things, but the peasant who has been reared among them, for all his unconsciousness, pines and dies without them. It is doubtful if the poor have gained. The chaw-bacon rustic who trimmed a hedge in the reign of George the First, compares well with the pale slum-rat of the reign of George V.

But if the machine age has profoundly altered the position of the working man, it has done still more with woman. It has dispossessed her. Her work has been taken away. The machine does it. It makes the clothes and brews the beer. The roar of the vacuum cleaner has hushed the sound of the broom. The proud proportions of the old-time cook, are dwindled to the slim outline of the gas-stove expert operating on a beefsteak with the aid of a thermometer. And at the close of day the machine, wound with a little key, sings the modern infant to its sleep, with the faultless lullaby of the Victrola. The home has passed, or at least is passing out of existence. In place of it is the "apartment"—an incomplete thing, a mere part of something, where children are an intrusion, where hospitality is done through a caterer, and where Christmas is only the twenty-fifth of December.

All this the machine age did for woman. For a time she suffered—the one thing she had learned, in the course of centuries, to do with admirable fitness. With each succeeding decade of the modern age things grew worse instead of better. The age

for marriage shifted. A wife instead of being a help-mate had become a burden that must be carried. It was no longer true that two could live on less than one. The prudent youth waited till he could "afford" a wife. Love itself grew timid. Little Cupid exchanged his bow and arrow for a book on arithmetic and studied money sums. The school girl who flew to Gretna Green in a green and yellow cabriolet beside a peach-faced youth,—angrily pursued by an ancient father of thirty-eight,—all this drifted into the pictures of the past, romantic but quite impossible.

Thus the unmarried woman, a quite distinct thing from the "old maid" of ancient times, came into existence, and multiplied and increased till there were millions of her.

Then there rose up in our own time, or within call of it, a deliverer. It was the Awful Woman with the Spectacles, and the doctrine that she preached was Woman's Rights. She came as a new thing, a hatchet in her hand, breaking glass. But in reality she was no new thing at all, and had her lineal descent in history from age to age. The Romans knew her as a sybil and shuddered at her. The Middle Ages called her a witch and burnt her. The ancient law of England named her a scold and ducked her in a pond. But the men of the modern age, living indoors and losing something of their ruder fibre, grew afraid of her. The Awful Woman,—meddlesome, vociferous, intrusive,—came into her own.

Her softer sisters followed her. She became the leader of her sex. "Things are all wrong," she screamed, "with the *status* of women." Therein she was quite right. "The remedy for it all," she howled, "is to make women 'free,' to give women the vote. When once women are 'free' everything will be all right." Therein the woman with the spectacles was, and is, utterly wrong.

The women's vote, when they get it, will leave women much as they were before.

Let it be admitted quite frankly that women are going to get the vote. Within a very short time all over the British Isles and North America,—in the States and the nine provinces of Canada,—woman suffrage will soon be an accomplished fact. It is a coming event which casts its shadow, or its illumination, in front of it. The woman's vote and total prohibition are two things that are moving across the map with gigantic strides. Whether they are good or bad things is another question. They are coming. As for the women's vote, it has largely come. And as for prohibition, it is going to be recorded as one of the results of the European War, foreseen by nobody. When the King of England decided that the way in which he could best help the country was by giving up drinking, the admission was fatal. It will stand as one of the landmarks of British history comparable only to such things as the signing of the Magna Carta

by King John, or the serving out of rum and water instead of pure rum in the British Navy under George III.

So the woman's vote and prohibition are coming. A few rare spots—such as Louisiana, and the City of New York—will remain and offer here and there a wet oasis in the desert of dry virtue. Even that cannot endure. Before many years are past, all over this continent women with a vote and men without a drink will stand looking at one another and wondering, what next?

For when the vote is reached the woman question will not be solved but only begun. In and of itself, a vote is nothing. It neither warms the skin nor fills the stomach. Very often the privilege of a vote confers nothing but the right to express one's opinion as to which of two crooks is the crookeder.

But after the women have obtained the vote the question is, what are they going to do with it? The answer is, nothing, or at any rate nothing that men would not do without them. Their only visible use of it will be to elect men into office. Fortunately for us all they will not elect women. Here and there perhaps at the outset, it will be done as the result of a sort of spite, a kind of sex antagonism bred by the controversy itself. But, speaking broadly, the women's vote will not be used to elect women to office. Women do not think enough of one another to do that. If they want a lawyer they consult a man, and those who can afford it have their clothes made by men, and their cooking done by a chef. As for their money, no woman would entrust that to another woman's keeping. They are far too wise for that.

So the woman's vote will not result in the setting up of female prime ministers and of parliaments in which the occupants of the treasury bench cast languishing eyes across at the flushed faces of the opposition. From the utter ruin involved in such an attempt at mixed government, the women themselves will save us. They will elect men. They may even pick some good ones. It is a nice question and will stand thinking about.

But what else, or what further can they do, by means of their vote and their representatives to "emancipate" and "liberate" their sex?

Many feminists would tell us at once that if women had the vote they would, first and foremost, throw everything open to women on the same terms as men. Whole speeches are made on this point, and a fine fury thrown into it, often very beautiful to behold.

The entire idea is a delusion. Practically all of the world's work is open to women now, wide open. *The only trouble is that they can't do it*. There is nothing to prevent a woman from managing a bank, or organising a company, or running a department store, or floating a merger, or building a railway,—except the simple fact

that she can't. Here and there an odd woman does such things, but she is only the exception that proves the rule. Such women are merely—and here I am speaking in the most decorous biological sense,—"sports." The ordinary woman cannot do the ordinary man's work. She never has and never will. The reasons why she can't are so many, that is, she "*can't*" in so many different ways, that it is not worth while to try to name them.

Here and there it is true there are things closed to women, not by their own inability but by the law. This is a gross injustice. There is no defence for it. The province in which I live, for example, refuses to allow women to practise as lawyers. This is wrong. Women have just as good a right to fail at being lawyers as they have at anything else. But even if all these legal disabilities, where they exist, were removed (as they will be under a woman's vote) the difference to women at large will be infinitesimal. A few gifted "sports" will earn a handsome livelihood, but the woman question in the larger sense will not move one inch nearer to solution.

The feminists, in fact, are haunted by the idea that it is possible for the average woman to have a life patterned after that of the ordinary man. They imagine her as having a career, a profession, a vocation,—something which will be her "life work,"—just as selling coal is the life work of the coal merchant.

If this were so, the whole question would be solved. Women and men would become equal and independent. It is thus indeed that the feminist sees them, through the roseate mist created by imagination. Husband and wife appear as a couple of honourable partners who share a house together. Each is off to business in the morning. The husband is, let us say, a stock broker: the wife manufactures iron and steel. The wife is a Liberal, the husband a Conservative. At their dinner they have animated discussions over the tariff till it is time for them to go to their clubs.

These two impossible creatures haunt the brain of the feminist and disport them in the pages of the up-to-date novel.

The whole thing is mere fiction. It is quite impossible for women,—the average and ordinary women,—to go in for having a career. Nature has forbidden it. The average woman must necessarily have,—I can only give the figures roughly,—about three and a quarter children. She must replace in the population herself and her husband with something over to allow for the people who never marry and for the children that do not reach maturity. If she fails to do this the population comes to an end. Any scheme of social life must allow for these three and a quarter children and for the years of care that must be devoted to them. The vacuum cleaner can take the place of the housewife. It cannot replace the mother. No man ever said his prayers at the knees of a vacuum cleaner, or drew his first lessons in manliness and worth

from the sweet old-fashioned stories that a vacuum cleaner told. Feminists of the enraged kind may talk as they will of the paid attendant and the expert baby-minder. Fiddlesticks! These things are a mere supplement, useful enough but as far away from the realities of motherhood as the vacuum cleaner itself. But the point is one that need not be laboured. Sensible people understand it as soon as said. With fools it is not worth while to argue.

But, it may be urged, there are, even as it is, a great many women who are working. The wages that they receive are extremely low. They are lower in most cases than the wages for the same, or similar work, done by men. Cannot the woman's vote at least remedy this?

Here is something that deserves thinking about and that is far more nearly within the realm of what is actual and possible than wild talk of equalising and revolutionising the sexes. It is quite true that women's work is underpaid. But this is only a part of a larger social injustice.

The case stands somewhat as follows: Women get low wages because low wages are all that they are worth. Taken by itself this is a brutal and misleading statement. What is meant is this. The rewards and punishments in the unequal and ill-adjusted world in which we live are most unfair. The price of anything,—sugar, potatoes, labour, or anything else,—varies according to the supply and demand: if many people want it and few can supply it the price goes up: if the contrary it goes down. If enough cabbages are brought to market they will not bring a cent a piece, no matter what it cost to raise them.

On these terms each of us sells his labour. The lucky ones, with some rare gift, or trained capacity, or some ability that by mere circumstance happens to be in a great demand, can sell high. If there were only one night plumber in a great city, and the water pipes in a dozen homes of a dozen millionaires should burst all at once, he might charge a fee like that of a consulting lawyer.

On the other hand the unlucky sellers whose numbers are greater than the demand,—the mass of common labourers,—get a mere pittance. To say that their wage represents all that they produce is to argue in a circle. It is the mere pious quietism with which the well-to-do man who is afraid to think boldly on social questions drugs his conscience to sleep.

So it stands with women's wages. It is the sheer numbers of the women themselves, crowding after the few jobs that they can do, that brings them down. It has nothing to do with the attitude of men collectively towards women in the lump. It cannot be remedied by any form of woman's freedom. Its remedy is bound up with the general removal of social injustice, the general abolition of poverty, which is to

prove the great question of the century before us. The question of women's wages is a part of the wages' question.

To my thinking the whole idea of making women free and equal (politically) with men as a way of improving their *status*, starts from a wrong basis and proceeds in a wrong direction.

Women need not more freedom but less. Social policy should proceed from the fundamental truth that women are and must be dependent. If they cannot be looked after by an individual (a thing on which they took their chance in earlier days) they must be looked after by the State. To expect a woman, for example, if left by the death of her husband with young children without support, to maintain herself by her own efforts, is the most absurd mockery of freedom ever devised. Earlier generations of mankind, for all that they lived in the jungle and wore cocoanut leaves, knew nothing of it. To turn a girl loose in the world to work for herself, when there is no work to be had, or none at a price that will support life, is a social crime.

I am not attempting to show in what way the principle of woman's dependence should be worked out in detail in legislation. Nothing short of a book could deal with it. All that the present essay attempts is the presentation of a point of view.

I have noticed that my clerical friends, on the rare occasions when they are privileged to preach to me, have a way of closing their sermons by "leaving their congregations with a thought." It is a good scheme. It suggests an inexhaustible fund of reserve thought not yet tapped. It keeps the congregation, let us hope, in a state of trembling eagerness for the next instalment.

With the readers of this essay I do the same. I leave them with the thought that perhaps in the modern age it is not the increased freedom of woman that is needed but the increased recognition of their dependence. Let the reader remain agonised over that till I write something else.

VI.—The Lot of the Schoolmaster

"Teachers," said the Minister of Education, swinging round in his chair, "are very cheap just now."

He looked at us fixedly. My colleague and I hung our heads. We realised that we had done a most impertinent thing in asking for a rise in salary. We felt like a couple of dock labourers who had been asking the boss for an extra five cents an hour—only less manly. We didn't exactly shuffle our boots and twirl our rough caps in our hands, while a tear did not, unbidden, course down our grimy cheeks. But we gave whatever symptoms of mute distress correspond to these things in people who have been expensively educated for ten years and have sunk all their available money in it.

We hadn't understood properly about the market for teachers. Somebody ought to have told us about it ten years before.

"Come, come," said the Minister of Education, for he was a kindly man at heart in spite of the rough duties of his office, "we can't give you a hundred and ten dollars a month just now. But what of that? You're young men yet. Keep right on. You're doing good work, both of you. You'll get it in time. Stick at it, my boys, and we'll see that you get your hundred and ten dollars, both of you, before you die."

Very likely we should have. But neither of us remained as schoolmasters long enough to know.

The incident happened more than twenty years ago and I can write of it now without bitterness; or at any rate with only the chastened regret of one who has spent the best years of his life doing task-work at a salary that began at fifty-eight dollars and thirty-three cents a month and after ten years of toil, expired from exhaustion at a hundred dollars. That salary is dead and gone now and it is not for me to speak ill of it. I was glad enough to get it at the time. Each month I used to take it from the bank, look at it and then divide it up as fairly as possible, among those who were entitled to receive a share of it.

But I am not here attempting to write a personal biography. I only mention these facts in order to show that on the present subject I am entitled to write with the authority of one who knows.

Nor am I proposing in this essay to write on any such simple theme as that the salaries of schoolmasters ought to be raised. I don't think they should. I think that a great many of them ought to be lowered and that others ought to be taken away altogether. What I propose to show is that the whole position of the schoolmaster is on a wrong basis and should be altered from top to bottom.

Let me explain at the outset that throughout this essay I am talking of what are called technically "secondary" teachers—those who teach in high schools, collegiate institutes and the large private and endowed schools. I am not undertaking any discussion of the status and outlook of the elementary teacher. He is in fact very generally a woman and perhaps deserves to be. At any rate he is not here in question. Still less, am I speaking of University professors. I have dealt with them in an earlier chapter. They form a class by themselves. There is nothing else in the world similar to them. It is the secondary school teacher whom I am calling, for lack of a more exact term, the "schoolmaster."

Now in my opinion (which is a very valuable one) the whole status of the schoolmaster on this continent is wrong. His position is unsatisfactory. His salary is too low and should be raised. It is also too high and ought to be lowered. His place in the community should be dignified and elevated. He also ought to be given three months' notice and dismissed. The work that the schoolmaster is doing is inestimable in its consequences. He is laying the foundation of the careers of the men who are to lead the next generation. He is also knocking all the best stuff out of a great number of them.

All of this is intended as a way of saying that, as at present organised or grown, the whole profession is chaotic. It is made up of young men and old men, good men and bad men, enthusiasts and time workers, martyrs and drones. They are in it, men of all types and ages. Here is a young man fresh out of college with clothes made by a city tailor and with hope still written upon his face; and beside him in the next class room is a poor ancient thing in a linen duster fumbling a piece of chalk in his hand, with the resigned pathos of intellectual failure stamped all over him.

But there is a certain broad and general statement that may be made covering the lot of them. The pay of all the younger ones is far too high. The pay of all the older ones is far too low. Nearly all of them are teachers not because they want to be but because they can't help it. Very few of them—hardly any of them—understand their job or can do it properly. Most of them—in the opinion of those who employ them—could be replaced without loss at a week's notice. None of them retire full of wealth and honour; but when they die, as most of them do, in harness, the school bell jangles out a harsh *requiem* over the departed teacher and the trustees fill his place at a five-minutes' meeting. Meanwhile the public voice and the public press is filled with the laudation of the captains of industry, of the kings of finance, of boy wizards who steal a fortune before they are twenty-five and of grand old men who carry it away grinning with them after death—to wherever grand old men go. These and such are shining marks from which the public approbation glints

as from a heliograph from hill to hill. The poor teacher in his whole life earns no greater publicity than his obituary notice at twenty-five cents for one insertion. And one is enough.

Now why should all this be? Why is it that there are no such things as wizards of the blackboard, boy wonders of the classroom, and alchemists of the chalk stick?

Let us look into the matter. Consider just who the teachers are and why they are teachers.

First of all there is the small, the very small minority, who, with a full choice before them, went into teaching because they wanted to; because they thought it a noble, honourable work at which to spend a life-time—not to be used merely as a stepping-stone to something else; because through their love of the profession they gave no thought to such drawbacks as the low pay, the slighted status of the teacher, the impossibility of marriage with a home equivalent to those of other men of equal industry and endowment—a home such as lawyers and doctors live in, such as kings of finance perpetually find too small for them, or such as those in which the senior clergy, in the pauses of their ghostly duties, take their lettered ease. To all of this the teacher—the enthusiast of whom I speak—has said goodbye at the threshold of his profession. He knew that he could never hope, as a successful schoolmaster, to dress as well as a successful lumberman or dog fancier, or join a club like a banker or play golf and drink whiskey and soda as a broker does. Yet some few men here and there make this deliberate choice. All honour to them for it—or at least all honour that ink and print can give them. They will get no other.

A few such men, and only a few, have I known. "Why did you go into teaching?" I asked long ago of one of my colleagues. "Because I think it a fine thing," he said. At the time I thought him an abandoned liar. Later I realised that he spoke the truth. It took some five years of experience of things as they are to crush the enthusiasm out of him. He left the profession without illusions and without regret. His place was filled by the trustees without a pang: teachers were cheap that year.

The truth is that, as things now are, it is not possible, or hardly possible, for a man to go into teaching for the love of it and at a conscious sacrifice, and to stay in it for the rest of his working life. It can't be done. Human nature is too weak. To make such a thing possible there would have to be no salary at all and the position marked out for the eyes of the multitude as one of conscious martyrdom. If a mathematical master at a collegiate institute were allowed to wear a long brown gown, with sandals and bare feet; if instead of being called Mr. Podge, he were called Father Aloysius or Brother Ambrose; if instead of feeding at a three-dollar boarding-house, he carried a bowl at his girdle into which people of their free will put lentils and peas

and sweet herbs—*then* the job would be all right. Human nature is such that on those terms men would give forth a life of strenuous devotion, asking no higher honour. There would be plenty of applicants for the position of Father Aloysius. Indeed, I might take a shot at it myself. But the unrecognised half-sacrifice of the teacher-enthusiast is not good enough.

Yet after all the enthusiasts of this sort are only a small minority. The same element enters, no doubt, in part into the cases of many other teachers—but only in part and not as the leading motive. The chief cause of most of the schoolmasters being so is because of the peculiar ease of access to the job. It is like a fly-trap, or fish-net. All may walk in; few can get out. What happens is this. There are a great number of youths who begin life with the idea that the way to success lies through a college education. This proposition may or may not be true. It is very likely that the best chance of pecuniary success lies in going into a linoleum factory or a hardware store at fifteen and learning while there is yet time how many cents make a dollar. But at any rate a college education is the recognised and only gateway to the professions of law, medicine and engineering. These appear to offer the best chances of success and the most attractive form of career. They are trees with plenty of branches at the top. The young birds fly straight towards them.

But a college education is a costly thing. To make a college graduate you have to sink in him a thousand dollars in cash, and I know not how much in other things. Funds run low; the young man's savings or his parents' spare money is exhausted. He graduates, as it were, on the brink of bankruptcy. The tall trees look infinitely far and the flight to their branches long and perilous. But standing beside them, close and easy of access, is a stubby tree, a meanly grown thing but carrying all its branches stuck out sideways and very low. This is the teaching profession and into it the crowd of young men, "shoo'd" over the precipice of graduation, are precipitated in a flock.

Not one in twenty—no, not one in a hundred—of these young men means to stay "in teaching." The idea of the average beginner is that he will stay in it long enough to save enough money to get out of it. It is to serve as a stepping stone to law or medicine, or something real.

Let the reader imagine the effect on the profession at the outset of this distorted point of view. Who would wish to be treated by a doctor who was saving up money to become a ship captain? Who would put money in a railroad if it were known that the president and the traffic manager and the rest of them were merely doing their work to get enough money to qualify to be opera singers? Is a judge saving money to be a poet, or a lawyer waiting to run a hotel? Never. But this bad element runs all

through the teaching profession like a rotten streak in a board. The thing is used as a mere stepping stone. The young men, those who can and who are not caught, do struggle out of it. Just as they are beginning to know something about the job they leave it and a new set of young men who know nothing about it take their places. Meantime a lot of them—I should say, at a guess, fifty per cent. of them—get caught in it and can't get out. The net has closed. Perhaps the young man becomes aware that one of the female teachers in the kindergarten department has eyes like a startled fawn and a soul like a running brook. The discovery is too much for him. By the time he recovers it is too late. He is a married teacher in a black lustre coat, saving money to put his eldest boy to college.

Or another fate may overtake the young man. He becomes, to put it very simply, lazy. All men do after the age of about thirty; though the successful ones are able to hide it by a great hustle of mimic activity. For the man on the make there is a whole apparatus of secretaries and subordinates, clubs, rendezvous, appointments, business trips to New York and so forth to cover up the fact that he has ceased to do any real work. Even from himself he hides it. He creates the fiction that he is working with his brain—an inner and mystic process which no one can dispute.

So the teacher, like all other men, gets lazy. It seems harder and harder to take the plunge, to face the loss of his salary, to re-enter a student's boarding-house and open a text book to start the study of law. Something, too, of the mock dignity of his teacher's office has got hold of him and eats into the sillier side of his mind. He has learned to set examinations; he hates to have to pass them. In his class-room he rules; when he says, "Jones, stand up," then up Jones stands. It is hard to give this up and to have a professor say to him, "Mr. Smith, sit down." No, it can't be done. He means to give up teaching. He still talks of law or medicine, or hints that he may go west. But he will go nowhere till he goes underground.

A great part of this trouble springs from the teacher's salary. It is too high. There it is, a hundred dollars a month, let us say, dead certain—no doubt and no delay about it. A lawyer makes (on the average and apart from exceptional cases) a few hundred dollars in his first year: perhaps not that; a young doctor makes on the average, something more than nothing; he walks hospitals, wears a white linen coat and says that his chief interest is in pathology; but what he really wants is a practice and after waiting a few years he gets it. These, and their like, the young engineer, lead a struggling life, subsisting on little, lying much and hoping very greatly. Meantime, the bovine teacher in his stall is as well paid at twenty-three as he will be at forty.

For there it is! The insane idea is abroad that a young teacher, a mere beginner,

is as good or practically so as a man of experience. No difference is made; or none that corresponds at all with the vast gulf that lies in every other profession between the tried and successful man and the youth who is only beginning. Compare the salary of a bank junior (you will need a slide rule to measure it) with that of a general manager of a bank. And do the shareholders object to the difference? Not for a moment; the dullest of them will explain you the reason of it in five minutes. And does the bank junior object to the general manager's high pay? Not for a minute; he means to have that job himself later on and he wants it to be as highly paid as possible: in fact that is why he is a bank junior just at present.

Let us reflect for a moment on what qualifications the real schoolmaster ought to have. First, he must possess the knowledge of the things he teaches in the school-room. This is a mere nothing. Any jackass can learn up enough algebra or geometry to teach it to a class of boys: in fact plenty of them do. But apart from the trivial qualification of knowing a few facts, the ideal schoolmaster has got to be the kind of man who can instinctively lead his fellow men (men are only grown-up boys, and boys are only undamaged men); who can inspire them to do what he says, because they want to be like him, who can kindle and keep alight in a boy's heart a determination to make of himself something that counts, to build up in himself every ounce of bodily strength and mental power and moral worth for which he has the capacity. The ideal schoolmaster should be a man filled with the gospel of strenuous purpose.

Theodore Roosevelt (though he would shoot me for saying so) ought to be a schoolmaster. So ought Lord Kitchener and the Grand Duke Nicholas. Indeed, there are any number of unclaimed schoolmasters masquerading in the world to-day as kings and captains merely because the profession is not made such as to call them in. But even strenuousness itself, intensity of purpose, is not all. Strenuousness without the capacity *to do things* degenerates into mere vague desire of accomplishment, a vapid fulness of intention, which is a sort of mental equivalent for wind on the stomach. Such is the attitude of the man who is perpetually talking of the "full life" and of "developing himself," who goes out into the woods to draw deep breaths and falls asleep after lunch while waiting to begin his life work. Our Schoolmaster must be other than that. He must be the type of man superior not only to the boys he teaches, but superior to the parents who send their sons to him; able to have been, had he so wished it, a better banker than the average bank manager, a better railroad man than the average one, with brains enough to give points to a lawyer and breadth enough to make even a doctor feel thin. This is the kind of man to be a schoolmaster. He is to be found perhaps in the ratio of one in ten thousand

ordinary citizens. Things being as they are with the trade, such a man is seldom if ever actually engaged as a school teacher. He is more probably a general, or a bishop, or the head of a great industry or the manager of an international trust or a four-ringed circus, or anything else that knows a good man when it sees him and is prepared to pay a price for him. There lies the point. To get the man you must hand out the pay. And as the pay is not forthcoming all the men of merit either never enter the lists as schoolmasters, or abandon the job before they are twenty-five.

To get and keep the right man it is necessary to pay him an income that will enable him to live with the same comfort and dignity as others of his endowment. There is no need to pay him this at the start. No man with a future before him cares a rush about the initial pay. But the thing must be there as a future, as a possibility, as something to work towards, so that from the first day of his work the man feels that his life is sealed to his chosen profession forever.

I do not mean to argue for a moment that a mere increase of salaries will at once transform the teaching profession. It cannot. You cannot make an incompetent man any better by merely raising his pay. The present situation cannot be remedied by such a simple process as that. Nine out of ten of the present teachers ought not to be schoolmasters at all. They might, at a pinch, get along tolerably well in the law, or on the bench, or as clergymen, but the idea of entrusting to them the supreme function of training the rising generation is nonsense.

I wish that I had time to organise a school, and that some good fairy would stand the expense of it till it got started. I mean, of course, a *real* fairy like Carnegie or Rockefeller, not the imitation one of the picture books. I would undertake to show to the world what a real school could be and, more surprising still, what a harvest of profit could be made from it. For the buildings and apparatus I would care not a straw. I wouldn't mind if the gymnasium contained a patent vaulting horse and a pneumatic chest exerciser or whether it just had wooden sides like a horse stable. These things don't matter at all. But I would engage, regardless of cost, the services of a set of men that would make every other school look like—well, look like what it is. I would select the senior masters with the same care and at the same salaries as if I were choosing presidents of railway companies and managers of banks. Let me try to give the reader an idea of what the staff of a first-rate school would look like. The list would read something after this fashion:

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL FOR BOYS

(*Beautifully situated in the Ozark Mountains, or the Adirondacks, or*

the Laurentians, or any place fifty miles from a moving picture.)

Headmaster.....	Mr. Woodrow Wilson
Treasurer and Bursar.	Pierpont Morgan, Esq.
Instructor in French...	Mons. Poincaré
Russian Teacher.....	Nich. Romanoff
Military Instructor.....	T. Roosevelt
English.....	{Sir James Barrie
	{ Mr. R. Kipling
Piano.....	Ig. Paderewski
Other Music.....	Al Jolson
Deportment.....	{ Sir Wilfrid Laurier
	{ Miss Jane Addams
Matron.....	W. Jennings Bryan
Chaplain.....	The Rev. W. Sunday

There! That looks pretty complete. I have not filled in the customary office of janitor and messenger. I admit that I might fill that myself.

Readers who are unacquainted with the subject may think that the above list contains an element of exaggeration. If so it is very slight. If the profession were what it ought to be these are the very men who would have been drawn into it. If the list sounds at all odd, it is only because we have reached a stage where it seems quite comic to make out a list of eminent and distinguished men and imagine them schoolmasters. The reader, if he did not appreciate it before, can easily estimate by his attitude towards this list, what he thinks of the status and importance of the school teacher.

But behind this list are facts. All of the instructors above, or people of their class, could be engaged at salaries ranging from thirty to fifty thousand dollars a year. I am not quite sure of the Czar and Al Jolson. But we may let them pass. A school with a staff like this would easily draw a thousand pupils at a yearly fee of two thousand dollars a head. There is not the slightest doubt of it. That would give an income of two million dollars a year. The salaries of the junior teachers would cut but little figure. They would serve, and be glad to, on the same terms as young lawyers or doctors entering on their professional life. With such a staff the simplest of buildings would serve the purpose as well as marble colonnades and Greek porticos. School buildings, as things are, are chiefly used to cover up the schoolmaster. They are like the white waistcoat and three-inch collar of the feeble-minded man.

"But," the reader may exclaim in his ignorance, "where are the parents to be found who will pay two thousand dollars a year in school fees?" Where? Why, my dear sir, you may find them anywhere and everywhere. You may see them in any up-to-date grill room eating asparagus at a dollar a plate; in any of the clubs where they drink whiskey and soda at thirty-five cents; on Pullman cars where they have to ride in a drawing-room to save them from the horrors of an ordinary bed; in steamers where they need a private promenade deck *de luxe* to keep them untainted by common intercourse. Two thousand a year! It is not worth talking about. You may stretch a string across any fashionable thoroughfare in any prosperous city and in ten minutes catch enough parents of this kind to fill an asylum. True, they don't pay two thousand dollars *now*. But that is because nobody asks them for it. They have been accustomed to think of a school teacher as a sort of usher, about half-way up in dignity between a ticket clerk and a furnace man. But once let them be able to boast that their little Willie is taught music by a man who costs ten thousand dollars a year, and you will see them on the stampede.

Nor is it only the parents who can afford it who will pay the high fees. There will be also the still larger class of those who *can't afford it*. There will be no holding them back. In this imperfect world people really appreciate only the things that they can't afford. That is what gives real pleasure. A motor car that is only half paid for, a Victrola that may be removed from the house at any moment, an encyclopedia with payments reaching beyond the grave—these are the true luxuries of life.

There is no doubt whatever as to how parents would act towards a two-thousand-dollar school.

Here I am able to speak with real authority. I learned all about "parents" in my school-teaching days. Every man, according to his profession, is brought into contact with his fellow beings in their different aspects. A car conductor sees men as "fares"; a gas company sees them as "consumers"; actors see them as "orchestra chairs"; barbers regard them as "shaves" and clergymen view them as "souls." The schoolmaster learns to know people as "parents" and in this aspect, I say it without hesitation, they are all more or less insane.

The parent's absorbing interest in his lop-eared boy (exactly like all other lop-eared boys), his conception of the importance of that slab-sided child and the place he occupies in the solar system, can only spring from an unbalanced mind. It is a useful delusion, I admit. Without it the world couldn't very well go on. The parent who could see his boy as he really is, would shake his head and say: "Willie is no good; I'll sell him."

But they don't see it and they can't. How often have I sat with parents in my

schoolmaster days, listening to their comments and instructions about their boys and nodding with the gravity of a Chinese mandarin while assenting to their suggestions about the boy's training.

My words, or at least my thoughts on such occasions, would have run something as follows: "To be bathed twice and *twice only* each week: Excellent, very good. A third bath only if an exceptional rise in the temperature seems to permit it: Admirable. I'll rise early and look at the thermometer—Never to be exposed to the morning dew: Ah, no, most certainly not. I shall be careful to brush it off the grass before he wakes. And his brain, a quite exceptional brain,—I was sure it was—on no account to be overstimulated or excited: Oh, assuredly not. And his clothes—true, true, a most important point—and so these are only his second best trousers that I see before me—most interesting—and I am to see that on Sunday morning he puts on his best—precisely, otherwise the impression he makes on the congregation at church might be seriously diminished. And as to discipline—quite so, an important point—a boy that can be led but not driven—precisely—I'll lead him—with a hook!"

Now, do you think that people in that frame of mind care what they spend? Not a particle.

There! I think the theme has been sufficiently developed. There is no need to wear it threadbare. The extension of the argument is plain enough. If the big private schools are remodelled, the others—the government collegiates and so on—follow suit, or follow as far as they can. The tax payer can never, of course, pay enough to make the free high school the equivalent of the two-thousand-dollar academy. But he will (for his own sake, since the tax payer is also a parent) be led on to pay more than he does, or at least to pay it to the men who deserve it. But I repeat I have no wish to wear the argument too thin. No doubt, as many of my friends will assure me, most of the statements above are at best only half truths. But the half truth is to me a kind of mellow moonlight in which I love to dwell. One sees better in it.

VII.—Fiction and Reality
A Study of the Art of Charles Dickens

It was in one of those literary circles into which I am sometimes permitted to enter, that the talk fell not long ago upon the art of Charles Dickens and his place in the world's literature.

"Dickens, of course," said a gentleman with a velvet jacket and long black hair, "is not really to be taken seriously."

"Is he not?" I said.

"Oh, no. One can't really call him a *novelist* in the true sense. His characters after all are not characters but merely caricatures." The speaker put his hand up to his necktie and gave it a peculiar little hitch. I had seen him do it twenty times already that evening.

"Every one of the characters in Dickens," he went on, "has some peculiar little tag, something that he is always doing and that you know him by" (here he hitched his necktie again)—"for example Traddles in *David Copperfield* is always trying to flatten his hair, What's-his-name in *Bleak House* is always taking snuff, some one else, Uriah Heep, is it not? is perpetually rubbing his hands together, and so on. Now in real life," continued the gentleman in the velvet jacket in a pitying tone—"people don't do these things,"—(Here he hitched his necktie) "they simply don't do them, that's all."

"Precisely," joined in another person who was standing near us, by occupation a professor of literature and hence one who ought to know; "there's no complexity in the characters, eh, what? Everything they say, so stilted, eh? Take their way of speaking, eh, what? Always using some little phrase, something you can tell them by, a sort of formula, eh, what?"

"Do you think so?" I said musingly. I was counting the number of times the professor was saying "eh" and I noted that he was up to four. I knew by experience that he could easily run up a hundred in five minutes.

"Take Mark Tapley," he went on, "you know,—in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, eh? Dickens can't make him speak without having him say 'jolly.' It seems like an obsession, eh? Don't you think so, eh, what?"

Some others joined us and the conversation became general. It appeared from it that Dickens was after all but a poor cheap comedian, a sort of black-faced vaudeville artist, a ventriloquist with a box full of grotesque impossible dolls, each

squawking out its little phrase amid the laughter of the uneducated. But as a writer in the real sense, he was, it seemed, nowhere. Put him beside,—I forget who—and he shrinks to a pigmy. Compare his work to,—somebody I have never heard of,—and it withers into dead grass. Take a really *great* man, a *big* man like,—I can't remember the name; he writes, I understand, a quarter of a column every third week in *The Saturday Supplement*: to do more would exhaust his vein,—and where is Dickens? Or take a man with the penetration of,—I can't recall whose penetration, —but again, where is Dickens?

From hearing which, I went home sad. For I have been reading Dickens now for thirty-two years,—ever since I first opened the pages of the *Pickwick Papers* and stepped into an enchanted world of English lanes, and stage coaches, and gabled inns and London streets, where I walked arm in arm with Micawber and Thomas Pinch and that great company of immortals, more real than life itself.

That evening after I had come home and sat down beside my fire, I fell to thinking what Dickens would have said, or what his characters themselves would have thought of the accusations to which I had been listening. If one could only get them together and put it to them, what would they think about it?

So I sat before the fire, a volume of Dickens upon my knee, musing, till it grew late.

And then——

"If the company will now come to order," said Mr. Pickwick, rapping gently on the table and beaming through his spectacles with a kindliness that seemed to irradiate the whole of the assemblage before him, "I will ask my good friend Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz to read the indictment in the matter before us."

There was an almost instant silence. Everybody present from sagacious persons such as Mr. Perker of Gray's Inn, or his unfathomable colleague Mr. Tulkinghorn, to such simple souls as Mr. Willett Senior, or Mr. Dick, could not fail to perceive that there must be something quite unusual on foot when Mr. Pickwick should speak of the learned Sergeant as his good friend, and should even appear to direct a glance of something like affectionate recognition towards Mr. Dodson and Fogg who were seated in close proximity to the great legal luminary himself.

"Half a minute, Pickwick,"—interrupted the cheery voice of a rather dilapidated but altogether brisk personage seated in one of the front rows of chairs, "dry business—lawyer's speech—go on talking—won't stop—perish of thirst—better let some one brew us punch—eh, sir—only a minute."

"Egad, Pickwick, Jingle's right," cried out Mr. Wardle, "let the lawyers talk away

if you like, but I'll be dashed, sir, if I'll sit here all evening with a dry throat listening to their palaver. Here, Emily, Joe,—where the dooce is that boy gone to——"

But long before the fat boy could be roused up from his slumbers in a remote corner of the hall where he lay enthroned upon a pile of rugs and wraps, among which the greatcoat of Mr. Weller Senior, and the shawl of Mrs. Gamp were plainly discernible,—another volunteer had stepped into the breach.

How and whence Mr. Micawber was suddenly able to produce a bag of lemons, by what necromancy sugar was added to them (set into such fascinating little lumps that the soul of the sugar trust might well shrink with envy at the sight of them), by what artifice he was able to combine them in proportions known only to himself with a square bottle of extra gin, and to bedew the surface of the steaming mixture with nutmegs that must have come from the very groves of Lebanon itself,—how all this was done, I say, passes the imagination to conceive. Necromancy it must have been indeed. For as the steaming bowl of punch sent its vapours throughout the room, so transfigured and yet so strangely life-like did the assembled company become as seen through its haze, that I vow it must have been brewed from the very lemons of reminiscence, mixed by that strange alchemy of affection that is wafted to us still from the pages of The Unforgotten Master.

"Excellent," said Mr. Pickwick, as he put down his glass, "I don't know when I've tasted better punch."

"Only once, perhaps," chuckled Mr. Wardle.

"Ah, well, yes, once, perhaps!" assented Mr. Pickwick with perfect serenity. And then turning to old Mrs. Wardle, who sat close on his left hand, attired in her very best cap, and who for this evening seemed to have laid aside every trace of deafness, he added—"Your son will have his joke, madam: he is reminding me of an incident to which I fear perhaps already too much attention has been given by—by ——"

Mr. Pickwick seemed to hesitate for a phrase. He looked in a somewhat dubious way towards Mr. Perker of Gray's Inn, and added:

"—by an undiscerning public."

"Quite so," nodded Mr. Perker lustily,—"by an undiscerning public. You may say that, Mr. Pickwick, with entire impunity. An undiscerning public. I take your meaning. Very good, sir; a glass of punch, sir?"

"With pleasure," said Mr. Pickwick. Whereupon there was such a hobnobbing of glasses and such an exchange of compliments, and such an affectionate reciprocity of sentiment in various parts of the hall that it seemed for a time as if the serious

business of the evening were likely to be indefinitely suspended.

All good things, however, even the drinking of punch by Mr. Micawber and his associates, must of necessity come to an end. Partly by sundry mild knockings on Mr. Pickwick's table and partly by more violent disturbances on the floor created by Mr. Bumble's staff a measure of quiet was restored.

"With your permission, then," said the illustrious chairman, "I will resume the course of my remarks. My intention had been to content myself with asking my good friend Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz to state the whole of the matter which brings us together. But perhaps I shall not be trespassing upon my valued friend's prerogative if I say a word or two in introduction of his discourse."

Loud cries of "Hear! hear!" mingled perhaps with a sound not entirely unlike the crowing of a cock and which may have proceeded from the lungs of Mr. Samuel Weller, indicated an ample assent.

"Very good," said Mr. Pickwick, evidently very much gratified. "I shall try to be very brief and, as I dare not pretend to emulate the talent of my learned friend, I will endeavour to say what I mean in as few words as possible."

Mr. Pickwick paused for a moment, and then with a look of something like constraint or even distress upon his usually unruffled countenance, he resumed:

"None of you, I fear, are altogether ignorant of the name of Mr. Blotton of Aldgate."

Loud groans, coupled with cries of "Shame! Traitor! Snake in the grass!" gave ample evidence to Mr. Pickwick (had he needed it) of the reputation which Mr. Blotton of Aldgate enjoyed among his associates. Indeed it had so long been the practice to exclude that gentleman and all mention of him from every assemblage of this sort that the company were filled with wonder that Mr. Pickwick himself should thus openly name his arch enemy and detractor.

"It is only with great reluctance," continued the good gentleman, "that I pronounce the name of this individual. His offence towards myself I readily pass over: but his want of respect towards that illustrious body which was good enough to honour me by designating itself after my name (I refer, more explicitly, to the Pickwick Club) is a matter which has, I think, already been condemned by the verdict of impartial history."

Mr. Pickwick looked about him. His audience evidently impressed by the fervour of the chairman's eloquence were now completely silent. Some of them indeed, as Mr. Weller Senior, were evidently so spellbound by Mr. Pickwick's oratory that they leaned back in their seats with their eyes closed as in an ecstacy of enjoyment.

"Had Mr. Blotton of Aldgate confined his malice to his disruption of the Pickwick Club, or even to the foul blow which he dealt to the noble science of Archæology in his unwarranted attack on the authenticity of an inscription which I may say at least stands, in spite of his onslaughts, unique in the annals of literature,—had his malice stopped here, despicable though it was, I for one should have been content to consign his memory to the ignominy which it has so richly deserved.

"But, gentlemen, it has not stopped here. It did not so stop. It has gone on. It is still with us."

Here Mr. Pickwick made another pause so dramatic and impressive that even those of his associates who were not yet aware of the purpose of the present gathering, realised that it was no ordinary communication that Mr. Pickwick was about to impart.

"It is now," continued Mr. Pickwick, "some eighty years since the individual to whom I allude first gave evidence of the singularly malicious composition of his individuality. It might have been hoped that it would long since have passed into oblivion. Alas, it was not to be. Like everything that was touched by that master hand of which we all, my assembled friends, are the common product, Mr. Blotton of Aldgate has proved immortal. More than that, he appears, like every character created by our great originator, to have been multiplied to infinity. I lament to say that in this later age every civilised country has its Aldgate, and every Aldgate, I grieve to state, is disfigured by its Blotton.

"One might have thought that our dead master's memory would have been left unassailed. Alas! every genius has its detractors. In every generous bosom a snake is warmed. And from this snake, from these snakes of whom I speak, from this cohort of snakes,"—here Mr. Pickwick spoke with the greatest animation, while his spectacles glittered with a just indignation that was reflected upon the listening faces before him,—"from these reptile Blottons of the Aldgates of all countries there has gone forth against our great originator, and hence, gentlemen, against each and every one of us, an accusation so foul, so despicable, that I know no other way to characterise it than to say that it could have only emanated from the mind of a Blotton of Aldgate. That accusation is——"

Here Mr. Pickwick paused and looked about him while the assembled company remained breathless upon the very verge of expectancy.

"That accusation is," repeated Mr. Pickwick, "that *we are not real, that we are caricatures*, that not one of us, and I beg the company to mark my words, not a single one of us, ever existed, or ever could exist; in short, my friends, that we are mere monstrous exaggerations, each of us drawn in a crude and comic fashion from

a few imaginary characteristics!!"

The mingled roar of indignation and contempt that burst from the throats of the auditors gave evidence at once to the power of Mr. Pickwick's oratory, and to the unanimity of their contempt. The loud cries of "Shame! Monstrous!" that broke from the lips of the indignant Wardle and the vociferous Boythorn, were not unmingled with the sound of the crowing of cocks and the popping of corks, which gave evidence of the lively feelings of Mr. Sam Weller, Alfred Jingle, Esqre., Mr. Tapley, and others of the lighter spirits of the company, while the voice of Mr. Micawber was heard above the din in loud enquiry as to whether this was still a British country or whether his own immediate return to his adoptive Australia was not necessitated by the lamentable but evident degeneration of the British Isles.

Mr. Pickwick waited until a measure of quiet had been restored and then resumed:

"Under the circumstances, gentlemen, you will not be surprised to learn that after consulting with my valued friend Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz, we have decided to hold an enquiry, or inquisition,—my learned friend will pardon me if the term is misapplied."

"A halibi, governor, make it a halibi," interrupted a deep warning voice, "it's far safer. Halibi first and henquiry afterwards."

"In any case," said Mr. Pickwick, "what I desire to do with your concurrence, is to place the whole case in the hands of our legal colleagues here present and to request our learned and distinguished friend, Sergeant Buzfuz, to conduct it for us."

Mr. Pickwick paused, turned with a courteous bow towards the long table at his right hand at which a serried phalanx of lawyers in full wigs and gowns were seated, and indicating with a wave of his hand the commanding figure of the illustrious Sergeant who sat at the head of the table, he resumed his seat.

Could any reader of the works of the Great Master have been present on this momentous occasion, it would have warmed his heart to have looked upon the solid array of legal talent at the long table over which Sergeant Buzfuz here presided. Nor could he, in the face of such an imposing panel, have felt the faintest apprehension that the base allegations of Mr. Blotton of Aldgate and of the numerous and loathsome progeny which have sprung from him, would not be scattered to the four winds of heaven.

Here sat in friendly colloquy with Buzfuz the equally illustrious Snubbins: beside them, among his piles of papers and his sacks of reference books, laboured the industrious Phunkey: near him the massive brow of the great Stryver, bound with a wet towel, was bent over a glass of still steaming punch as if seeking a final inspiration: the nimble Perker of Grey's Inn was side by side with the inscrutable

Tulkinghorn of Lincoln's: here sat Wakefield, his wasted face imprinted with the dumb pathos of his broken mind, clasping his daughter's hand for comfort: here even the ghastly Vholes and the unregenerate Heep and the obsequious Dodson and Fogg mingled their false plaudits with the approbation of the crowd: and here at the further end, with head back-tilted on the chair, with eyes that sought the ceiling, and with pale lips that still murmured the threnody of the guillotine, the immortal figure of Carton, lit with a softer light as of the dead among the living.

So sat they, the unreal lawyers of the unreal books of the Master, and as they sat betokened by their very presence a greater power of life and truth than life itself.

Sergeant Buzfuz rose. We wish it were within our power to present to our readers a full report of the magnificent oration delivered by that learned man. The introduction alone in which the Sergeant, with the aid of books and documents, handed to him by Mr. Stryver, rapidly reviewed the history of literature from Plato to Chesterton, was of such singular merit that Mr. Solomon Pell was heard to remark that not even his intimate friend the Lord Chancellor could have made a better presentation. They had before them, said the learned Sergeant, not merely a question of art, but a question of reality, and of the relation between the two. Of the nature of reality he would not leave them long in doubt. Witnesses would be called (witnesses of unimpeachable character) who should establish the nature of reality to an iota. Nor should they long remain in doubt as to the nature and meaning of art. He would, if need be, call to the witness box a gentleman of unexcelled antiquarian learning who should establish to their satisfaction the fact of the existence of art among the Romans (here all eyes were turned for a moment towards Dr. Blimber). He would, if it were necessary, further establish the point from the lips of the consort of that distinguished scholar who would testify that there were distinct traces of art even in the writings of Cicero. He would have the word itself examined, searched and impounded by one of the greatest lexicographers of the age (here the Sergeant bowed politely in the direction of Dr. Strong),—a lexicographer, he would add, whose labours had now long since overpassed the question of Art, and all other questions beginning with the noble letter A and were now rapidly traversing the letter D.

"But, gentlemen," continued the Sergeant, and at this point we are able to reproduce his words verbatim, "we need here something more than mere definitions. It is ours to enquire how far ART,—which in this instance is represented by *FICTION*,—is at one with reality: how far the picture of life presented must correspond lineament for lineament with the literal aspect of the thing itself. The

accusation has been made in the affidavits of Mr. Blotton of Aldgate that the art of the Great Master is false: that it shows life and character not as they are but distorted into a series of caricatures. The fatal word 'exaggeration' has been launched upon an unsuspecting world. Charles Dickens,"—here the Sergeant for the first time and with an intense majesty of bearing and expression, uttered that noble name before the company,—"CHARLES DICKENS EXAGGERATES. That is the charge of which he stands accused. That is the foul calumny by which his fair name is rapidly being overcast. He has made each of us here present represent and typify (so runs the allegation) merely a single characteristic, and that, too, distorted and magnified beyond its natural shape. I, myself, gentlemen, as presented in the laudable, though I admit somewhat too impartial pages of the *Pickwick Papers*, represent (so it is said) a mere abstraction of forensic eloquence (I believe the word 'bombast' is used in the allegation before us)——"

The Sergeant paused for the fraction of a second, and something like an expression of doubt, of uncertainty was seen to rest upon his features. But it passed as rapidly as it had come and he resumed:

"My good friend, Mr. Pickwick, is mere benevolence, sheer insipid benevolence, nothing else——"

At this point, somewhat to the distraction of the speaker, the genial countenance of the chairman, from his spectacles to his double chin, was seen to beam with an expression of such utter and complete benevolence that the Sergeant thought it well to leave that item of his argument incomplete.

"Our friend, William Sykes (he is not in this gathering, but I understand that he is at present engaged in crawling about the roof of this building),—our worthy colleague, Mr. Carker, our esteemed ally, Mr. Jonas Chuzzlewit, these are said to impersonate sheer malice of disposition and nothing else—nay, even my good friend, Mr. Pecksniff, whom I believe I see at the end of the hall warming his back at the fire in a manner I think familiar to all, is said to stand for sheer hypocrisy and for no other conceivable characteristic."

At this point Mr. Pecksniff, for he indeed it was, was seen to lift a deprecating hand and those who stood or sat nearest to him were able to hear him enjoin his daughter Mercy in an audible whisper that she should remind him that night to make explicit mention of all literary critics in his prayers.

"Or to come down to mere particulars and idiosyncracies," went on Sergeant Buzfuz, "it is said that our good friend, Mr. Uriah Heep, is always 'rubbing his hands.'" ("I admit," said the Sergeant glancing with a slight frown at the lawyer's table where Uriah sat, "that he is doing so,—happens to be doing so,—at this

particular moment.") "But the allegation runs that he is always and perpetually doing so beyond the verge of human credence. It is similarly charged that Mr. Micawber is always and perpetually brewing punch (Mr. Micawber's guilty hand was seen to retreat noiselessly from the punch bowl as the Sergeant's eye turned to him), that he also is always waiting for something to turn up, that Mr. Mark Tapley is always 'jolly,' that my honoured friend Mr. Wardle owns and conducts a country house where it is always and perpetually Christmas, that Mr. Jingle only speaks in monosyllables and broken phrases and has never been known to make a sentence in his life——"

"Stop, there"—interrupted the voice of the dilapidated Alfred Jingle, "damn lie—sentence once—Fleet Street sentence—never forget—noble conduct—everlasting gratitude——"

"Tut, tut," interrupted the chairman, "I am sure there are lots of things that we all had better agree to forget."

The Sergeant's unhappy introduction of the word "sentence" seemed to occasion so peculiar a feeling of discomfort in a number of the auditors (the lively agitation of Mr. Heep, Mr. Micawber and others was especially noticeable) that the speaker with the instinctive feeling of the orator realised that it was impossible to resume his suspended period.

"But, gentlemen," he continued, "the hour waxes already late. I will no longer expatiate upon the nature of the charge before us. I will proceed at once in its rebuttal."

Here the Sergeant consulted for a moment a list of names that was handed to him by Mr. Phunkey.

"Call Sarah Gamp," he cried.

There was a sudden stir in a distant part of the hall, as of a heavy body being set into motion, and to the evident satisfaction of everybody the familiar form of Mrs. Gamp, who had apparently resumed her shawl and her pattens, was seen to approach the table. She presently brought up alongside it with as much majesty of movement as that of a full-rigged coal barge coming to anchor beside the Embankment.

The Sergeant now turned to the lawyers' table and addressed one of the members of the panel whose rusted black attire, whose pale, indeed ghastly, face and whose uncertain eyes and ambiguous expression left no doubt of his identity.

"Mr. Vholes," he said, "I understand from the Chairman that it is the general desire of the assemblage that you should act, as it were, as the *advocatus diaboli*, in other words, should have the privilege of appearing for the prosecution. You are at

liberty to question the witness."

Mr. Vholes arose. Accustomed as he was to the more leisurely procedure and the congenial delays of the Court of Chancery, he may well have felt somewhat ill at ease in the summary methods of investigation here adopted by the Sergeant. But his courage was fortified by the presence of sundry volumes of literary criticism that lay heaped before him, written in various languages, mostly other than English, on which he relied to establish his case.

"Your name," he said, "is Sarah Gamp?"

"Widge I scorn to deny it," answered that lady.

"Your profession, I understand, is that of a nurse."

"Widge it is," said Mrs. Gamp, "and as I was saying only yesterday to Mrs. Harris, which I don't see here to-night owing to the fact of her being unable to come, and it being the third time, poor soul, in as many years——"

Mr. Pickwick coughed.

"I must beg you, Mrs. Gamp," he said, "to realise that in the lapse of eighty years a certain change in public taste has dictated—a—has prescribed certain forms of reticence——"

"Retigence!" said Mrs. Gamp, bridling, "don't talk to me of retigence as if I was a Betsy Prigg that couldn't be trusted within sight of a brandy bottle. Widge I abhor," she added, "except it might be for a chill and being overtired after sitting up with a demise——"

"Very good, Mrs. Gamp," broke in Mr. Vholes, delighted to find his witness developing immediately and without guidance the very characteristics and no others which he wished to elucidate,—"now tell us, please, Mrs. Gamp, and remember that you are virtually under oath—Are you real?"

"Am I widge?" said Mrs. Gamp.

"Are you real?" said the rusty lawyer. "Do you mean to tell this court,—this assembly,—that there ever have been or could be women like you; are you willing to assert that you are anything more than an abstraction? Have you ever, in the eighty years of retrospect laid open to us, ever really lived?"

Mrs. Gamp might have answered. We say advisedly "might have," in the course of time, although to all intent and purpose she seemed suddenly to be rooted immovable, her mouth half open, her features fixed in a stare of mingled surprise and contempt at her interlocutor. But her answer was not needed. For at this moment a very singular thing happened. Whether it was due to the necromancy of Mr. Micawber's punch, or to the lateness of the hour, or to the growing absorption of the assembled auditors, we cannot say. But the truth is that as they sat gazing fixedly at

the witness, a strange and wonderful phenomenon made itself felt. The face and form of Mrs. Gamp were multiplied before their eyes into not one but a thousand forms. It was as if the bounds of space and time were pushed aside and the eye could see through the long vista of the years, and through the broad expanse of space from country to country, not one but a thousand,—a hundred thousand Gamps. Here were Gamps in London garrets tending dying fires beside the already dead,—Gamps moving to and fro in area kitchens, their mysterious pattens clicking on the stone floor—Gamps with monstrous umbrellas staggering in the rain,—Gamps tending market stalls in the London fog,—nay, it was as if Mr. Vholes' words had acted like a talisman to call forth a legion of Gamps to prove the existence of a single one. Nor were the Sarah Gamps confined to a single time or country: there were mid-Victorian Gamps and Gamps of the closing century, Australian Gamps vigorously washing clothes beneath the gum trees, Canadian Gamps scrubbing stone steps regardless of the thermometer, French Gamps busily checking umbrellas in the theatres, American Gamps superintending ladies' withdrawing rooms in railroad stations, nay, I will swear it,—Gamps that in form and fashion were negro, negroid or mulatto, but still evidently and indisputably Sarah Gamp. Strangest of all, no two of the figures in the vision seemed quite alike: the red shawl might or might not be present, the brandy bottle might or might not be there, the clicking of the pattens might or might not be heard,—and yet indisputably and undeniably each of the figures was the same illustrious undying, ever repeating Sarah Gamp.

Mr. Vholes, aghast at the vision that he had summoned, sank into his seat.

"I think, Mrs. Gamp," said Mr. Pickwick, "that we need not question you further. You, at least, exist."

Sergeant Buzfuz rose again to his feet.

"Call Mr. Pecksniff," he said.

That gentleman, who was carefully attired in his customary long black coat and irreproachable white tie and who had by this time warmed his back until it had attained to that comfortable sensation demanded by his altruistic feelings, drew near to the lawyers' table.

"Perhaps, Mr. Fogg," continued the Sergeant, "as our friend Mr. Vholes appears to be incapacitated for further effort, you will yourself be good enough to examine this witness."

Mr. Fogg rose in his place, bowed to the Sergeant and the Chairman, and directed his attention to Mr. Pecksniff.

"Your name, I believe," he said, "is Mr. Pecksniff."

The latter gentleman bowed.

"Will you kindly tell the assembled company," went on Mr. Fogg, looking about him with a great assumption of sharpness, "what is the nature of your profession?"

"I am," said Mr. Pecksniff, "in my humble capacity an architect."

"And will you please tell us," pursued Mr. Fogg, "what principal buildings you have designed?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Pecksniff with great urbanity, "none at all."

"None at all!" repeated Mr. Fogg, surprised.

"None at all," reiterated Mr. Pecksniff. "To be quite frank and candid," he continued, "as we are speaking here purely among friends and I presume under the seal of confidence, I may say that the buildings which I am supposed to have designed were all the work of other people."

"Do you see any of them here?" queried the lawyer.

"One or two," said Mr. Pecksniff unabashed. "I think I see my young friend Thomas Pinch, whose talent was for many years invaluable to me, and, I believe, Mr. Martin Chuzzlewit, whose design for a grammar school has always been considered one of my most successful inspirations."

"In other words, sir," said Mr. Fogg, with great severity, "you are an arrant hypocrite."

"I am," said Mr. Pecksniff, with a bow.

"And a fraud, sir."

"At your service," said Mr. Pecksniff.

"You pocket money that you never earned."

"I do," assented Mr. Pecksniff.

"And you cover it up with a cloak of religion and family affection?"

"Precisely," said Mr. Pecksniff, smiling urbanely and placing his hands beneath his coat tails with his familiar gesture of self-satisfaction, "that is exactly my policy."

"And do you mean, sir," said Mr. Fogg, swelling visibly with the importance of his inquiry, "do you mean to tell this sensible, this sagacious company that in face of these facts,—of your carrying on business in this fashion, that you are a real person? Have you the assurance, sir, to state in the face of this damning evidence, that there are real people such as you in actual business in actual life?"

Mr. Fogg, to judge by the way in which he here drew himself up, apparently expected that the result of his enquiry would be so to crush and annihilate both the witness and the auditors as to explode the very existence of Mr. Pecksniff into the thinnest nothingness of the most impossible fiction. If so, his expectation was doomed to disappointment. For he had no sooner propounded his question as to

whether real business by real people was carried on in this fashion than the entire audience broke into loud and uncontrolled laughter. It may have been that the seventy years that have elapsed since the first earthly incarnation of Mr. Pecksniff have accentuated the character of modern business. But certain it is that the notion that the existence of Mr. Pecksniff and his methods was a thing unheard of in the present business world convulsed the assembly with spontaneous merriment. We will not say that the same strange phenomenon repeated itself as in the case of Mrs. Gamp. But it is undoubted that before the minds of the auditors there might well have arisen the vision of an unending, undying series of Pecksniffs,—English, American, and Continental—Pecksniffs of the old world and Pecksniffs of the new—Pecksniffs in little white ties sitting at board meetings of corporations, Pecksniffs in long black coats presiding at funerals, Pecksniffs interviewing delegations of workingmen and refusing with deep reluctance all suggestions of increases of wages, Pecksniffs presiding over colleges, Pecksniffs elected into senates, Pecksniffs in city councils—till from the very length and extension of the series it appeared as if Mr. Pecksniff expressed within himself the whole spirit and essence of modern business and modern politics. Indeed it appeared not merely as if Mr. Pecksniff were extremely real and actually existed, but as if there existed more of him than of any other human being.

Small wonder then that when Mr. Fogg resumed his seat and Mr. Pecksniff complacently returned to his place in front of the fire, there was a general feeling that the reality of at least his character had been more than vindicated.

We could only wish that the limits of space before us would allow of an extended description of the examination of the succeeding witnesses. We could wish that we might convey to our readers some notion of the genial warmth with which Mr. Wardle met the accusation that his house at Dingley Dell was an impossible place such as could only have existed in the grossest and most exaggerated fiction: of how he took his oath, with perhaps unnecessary emphasis, that it was just the kind of house that might be found by those who had the eyes to see it, especially at Christmas time, throughout the length and breadth of England: of how he met the accusation that it was always Christmas time at his house by the simple but convincing statement that it always was: of how he met the charge that his young medical friends, Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen, were not possible or actual people by offering to turn any two dozen distinguished modern doctors inside out and find a Bob Sawyer and a Ben Allen coiled up in the composition of any one of them: and of how he presently retired triumphant from the witness stand amid the uproarious applause of Mr. Weller, Mr. Tapley and even the excitable Mr. Sawyer

himself.

Equally fain should we be to describe the examination of Mr. Weller Senior, and how he refused to be drawn into any generalisation as to whether actual London bus-drivers and hackney coachmen might be said to resemble himself: or how his solicitor and friend, Mr. Pell (an intimate acquaintance of the Lord Chancellor), saved the day by producing no less than fifty sworn and authenticated photographs of London busmen and cabmen of the year of grace 1916, every one of which was conceived in the very spirit and likeness of Mr. Tony Weller. Equally regrettable it is that we cannot linger to describe the triumphant exoneration of Mr. Micawber, of Mr. Wackford Squeers, of Captain Cuttle and others whose characters had been made the subject of unjust aspersions. In every case it was shown with the greatest ease that these gentlemen not only had actually lived but were still living, and that too in every habitable country of the Christian globe. Only one incident of a slightly discordant nature occurred to mar the symmetry of the occasion. At the very height of the general enthusiasm, a number of females,—conspicuous among whom were Mrs. Annie Strong, and Little Nell,—forced their way to the front and burst into such floods of tears that for the time being they threatened to wash away the entire assembly in the flood tide of their grief. Mrs. Strong, indeed, kneeling at the feet of each of the lawyers in turn and offering to make an ample atonement to each one of them for the errors of her past life, may be said to have pushed the bounds of reality to the breaking point. Indeed for a moment when the loud sobs of Ham Peggotty, John Perrybingle, and others of the men were conjoined with those of the women, it seemed as if the meeting might end in disaster.

But at the critical moment the voice of Sergeant Buzfuz, who declared that the evidence was now all complete and that under the rules of the court evidence given through tears could not be admitted, saved the situation. And when a moment later the Sergeant called upon Dr. Blimber to summarise the general conclusions of the assembly, it was felt that a great cause had been saved.

Of the final discourse of Dr. Blimber we fear that we can only give the briefest outline. Whether from the lateness of the hour or from the majestic roll of the Doctor's periods, our eyes were closed in such an exquisite appreciation of his eloquence, that the details of it escaped our apprehension. But we understood him to say that the truth was that from the time of the Romans onward Art had of necessity proceeded by the method of selected particulars and conspicuous qualities: that this was the nature and meaning of art itself: that exaggeration (meaning the heightening of the colour to be conveyed) was the very life of it: that herein lay the difference between the photograph (we believe the Doctor said the daguerreotype) and the

portrait: that by this means and by this means alone could the real truth,—the reality greater than life be conveyed.

All of this and more we truly believe the Doctor to have said.

But as he continued speaking his voice to our ears seemed to grow fainter and fainter, the pictured company around grew dim before the eye, a gentle haze gradually enshrouded the benevolent face of Mr. Pickwick as he sat with closed eyes and head sunk forward, intent upon the Doctor's every word—fainter to the ear and dimmer to the eye—until somehow, as with the soft vanishing of a cherished vision, the picture drifted from our sight—and we sat alone awake beside the smouldering fire, the open book of the Great Master across our knee, musing over the profundity of its God-given message.

VIII.—The Amazing Genius of O. Henry

To British readers of this book the above heading may look like the title of a comic story of Irish life with the apostrophe gone wrong. It is, alas! only too likely that many, perhaps the majority, of British readers have never heard of O. Henry. It is quite possible also that they are not ashamed of themselves on that account. Such readers would, in truly British fashion, merely classify O. Henry as one of the people that "one has never heard of." If there was any disparagement implied, it would be, as O. Henry himself would have remarked, "on him." And yet there have been sold in the United States, so it is claimed, one million copies of his books.

The point is one which illustrates some of the difficulties which beset the circulation of literature, though written in a common tongue, to and fro across the Atlantic. The British and the American public has each its own preconceived ideas about what it proposes to like. The British reader turns with distaste from anything which bears to him the taint of literary vulgarity or cheapness; he instinctively loves anything which seems to have the stamp of scholarship and revels in a classical allusion even when he doesn't understand it.

This state of mind has its qualities and its defects. Undoubtedly it makes for the preservation of a standard and a proper appreciation of the literature of the past. It helps to keep the fool in his place, imitating, like a watchful monkey, the admirations of better men. But on its defective side it sins against the light of intellectual honesty.

The attitude of the American reading public is turned the other way. I am not speaking here of the small minority which reads Walter Pater in a soft leather cover, listens to lectures on Bergsonian illusionism and prefers a drama league to a bridge club. I refer to the great mass of the American people, such as live in frame dwellings in the country, or exist in city boarding-houses, ride in the subway, attend a ten-twenty-thirty vaudeville show in preference to an Ibsen drama, and read a one-cent newspaper because it is intellectually easier than a two. This is the real public. It is not, of course, ignorant in the balder sense. A large part of it is, technically, highly educated and absorbs the great mass of the fifty thousand college degrees granted in America each year. But it has an instinctive horror of "learning," such as a cat feels towards running water. It has invented for itself the ominous word "highbrow" as a sign of warning placed over things to be avoided. This word to the American mind conveys much the same "taboo" as haunts the tomb of a Polynesian warrior, or the sacred horror that enveloped in ancient days the dark pine grove of a Sylvan deity.

For the ordinary American this word "highbrow" has been pieced together out

of recollections of a college professor in a black tail coat and straw hat destroying the peace of an Adirondack boarding-house: out of the unforgotten dullness of a Chautauqua lecture course, or the expiring agonies of a Browning Society. To such a mind the word "highbrow" sweeps a wide and comprehensive area with the red flag of warning. It covers, for example, the whole of history, or, at least, the part of it antecedent to the two last presidential elections. All foreign literature, and all references to it are "highbrow." Shakespeare, except as revived at twenty-five cents a seat with proper alterations in the text, is "highbrow." The works of Milton, the theory of evolution, and, in fact, all science other than Christian science, is "highbrow." A man may only read and discuss such things at his peril. If he does so, he falls forthwith into the class of the Chautauqua lecturer and the vacation professor; he loses all claim to mingle in the main stream of life by taking a hand at ten-cent poker, or giving his views on the outcome of the 1916 elections.

All this, however, by way of preliminary discussion suggested by the strange obscurity of O. Henry in Great Britain, and the wide and increasing popularity of his books in America. O. Henry is, more than any author who ever wrote in the United States, an American writer. As such his work may well appear to a British reader strange and unusual, and, at a casual glance, not attractive. It looks at first sight as if written in American slang, as if it were the careless unrevised production of a journalist. But this is only the impression of an open page, or at best, a judgment formed by a reader who has had the ill-fortune to light upon the less valuable part of O. Henry's output. Let it be remembered that he wrote over two hundred stories. Even in Kentucky, where it is claimed that all whiskey is good whiskey, it is admitted that some whiskey is not so good as the rest. So it may be allowed to the most infatuated admirer of O. Henry, to admit that some of his stories are not as good as the others. Yet even that admission would be reluctant.

But let us recommence in more orthodox fashion.

O. Henry,—as he signed himself,—was born in 1867, most probably at Greensboro, North Carolina. For the first thirty or thirty-five years of his life, few knew or cared where he was born, or whither he was going. Now that he has been dead five years he shares already with Homer the honour of a disputed birthplace.

His real name was William Sydney Porter. His *nom de plume*, O. Henry,—hopelessly tame and colourless from a literary point of view,—seems to have been adapted in a whimsical moment, with no great thought as to its aptness. It is amazing that he should have selected so poor a pen name. Those who can remember their first shock of pleased surprise on hearing that Rudyard Kipling's name was really Rudyard Kipling, will feel something like pain in learning that any writer could

deliberately christen himself "O. Henry."

The circumstance is all the more peculiar inasmuch as O. Henry's works abound in ingenious nomenclature. The names that he claps on his Central American adventurers are things of joy to the artistic eye,—General Perrico Ximenes Villablanca Falcon! Ramon Angel de las Cruzes y Miraflores, president of the republic of Anchuria! Don Señor el Coronel Encarnacion Rios! The very spirit of romance and revolution breathes through them! Or what more beautiful for a Nevada town than Topaz City? What name more appropriate for a commuter's suburb than Floralhurst? And these are only examples among thousands. In all the two hundred stories that O. Henry wrote, there is hardly a single name that is inappropriate or without a proper literary suggestiveness, except the name that he signed to them.

While still a boy, O. Henry (there is no use in calling him anything else) went to Texas, where he worked for three years on a ranch. He drifted into the city of Houston and got employment on a newspaper. A year later he bought a newspaper of his own in Austin, Texas, for the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars. He rechristened it *The Rolling Stone*, wrote it, and even illustrated it, himself. But the paper was too well named. Its editor himself rolled away from it, and from the shores of Texas the wandering restlessness that was characteristic of him wafted him down the great gulf to the enchanted land of Central America. Here he "knocked around," as he himself has put it, "mostly among refugees and consuls." Here too was laid the foundation of much of his most characteristic work,—his *Cabbages and Kings*, and such stories as *Phœbe* and *The Fourth in Salvador*.

Latin America fascinated O. Henry. The languor of the tropics; the sunlit seas with their open bays and broad sanded beaches, with green palms nodding on the slopes above,—white-painted steamers lazily at anchor,—quaint Spanish towns, with adobe houses and wide squares, sunk in their noon-day sleep,—beautiful Señoritas drowsing away the afternoon in hammocks; the tinkling of the mule bells on the mountain track above the town,—the cries of unknown birds issuing from the dense green of the unbroken jungle—and at night in the soft darkness, the low murmur of the guitar, soft thrumming with the voice of love—these are the sights and sounds of O. Henry's Central America. Here live and move his tattered revolutionists, his gaudy generals of the mimic army of the existing republic; hither ply his white-painted steamers of the fruit trade; here the American consul, with a shadowed past and $600 a year, drinks away the remembrance of his northern

energy and his college education in the land of forgetfulness. Hither the absconding banker from the States is dropped from the passing steamer, clutching tight in his shaking hand his valise of stolen dollars; him the disguised detective, lounging beside the little drinking shop, watches with a furtive eye. And here in this land of enchantment the broken lives, the wasted hopes, the ambition that was never reached, the frailty that was never conquered, are somehow pieced together and illuminated into what they might have been,—and even the reckless crime and the open sin, viewed in the softened haze of such an atmosphere, are half forgiven.

Whether this is the "real Central America" or not, is of no consequence. It probably is not. The "real Central America" may best be left to the up-to-date specialist, the energetic newspaper expert, or the travelling lady correspondent,—to all such persons, in fact, as are capable of writing *Six Weeks in Nicaragua*, or *Costa Rica As I Saw It*. Most likely the Central America of O. Henry is as gloriously unreal as the London of Charles Dickens, or the Salem of Nathaniel Hawthorne, or any other beautiful picture of the higher truth of life that can be shattered into splinters in the distorting prism of cold fact.

From Central America O. Henry rolled, drifted or floated,—there was no method in his life,—back to Texas again. Here he worked for two weeks in a drug store. This brief experience supplied him all the rest of his life with local colour and technical material for his stories. So well has he used it that the obstinate legend still runs that O. Henry was a druggist. A strict examination of his work would show that he knew the names of about seventeen drugs and was able to describe the rolling of pills with the life-like accuracy of one who has rolled them. But it was characteristic of his instinct for literary values that even on this slender basis O. Henry was able to make his characters "take down from shelves" such mysterious things as *Sod. et Pot. Tart.*, or discuss whether magnesia carbonate or pulverised glycerine is the best excipient, and in moments of high tragedy poison themselves with "tincture of aconite."

Whether these terms are correctly used or not I do not know. Nor can I conceive that it matters. O. Henry was a literary artist first, last and always. It was the effect and the feeling that he wanted. For technical accuracy he cared not one whit. There is a certain kind of author who thinks to make literature by introducing, let us say, a plumber using seven different kinds of tap-washers with seven different names; and there is a certain type of reader who is thereby conscious of seven different kinds of ignorance, and is fascinated forthwith. From pedantry of this sort O. Henry is entirely free. Even literal accuracy is nothing to him so long as he gets his effect. Thus he commences one of his stories with the brazen statement: "In Texas

you may journey for a thousand miles in a straight line." You can't, of course; and O. Henry knew it. It is only his way of saying that Texas is a very big place. So with his tincture of aconite. It may be poisonous or it may be not. But it sounds poisonous and that is enough for O. Henry. This is true art.

After his brief drug-store experience O. Henry moved to New Orleans. Even in his Texan and Central American days he seems to have scribbled stories. In New Orleans he set to work deliberately as a writer. Much of his best work was poured forth with the prodigality of genius into the columns of the daily press without thought of fame. The money that he received, so it is said, was but a pittance. Stories that would sell to-day,—were O. Henry alive and writing them now,—for a thousand dollars, went for next to nothing. Throughout his life money meant little or nothing to him. If he had it, he spent it, loaned it or gave it away. When he had it not he bargained with an editor for the payment in advance of a story which he meant to write, and of which he exhibited the title or a few sentences as a sample, and which he wrote, faithfully enough, "when he got round to it." The story runs of how one night a beggar on the street asked O. Henry for money. He drew forth a coin from his pocket in the darkness and handed it to the man. A few moments later the beggar looked at the coin under a street lamp and, being even such a beggar as O. Henry loved to write about, he came running back with the words, "Say, you made a mistake, this is a twenty-dollar gold piece." "I know it is," said O. Henry, "but it's all I have."

The story may not be true. But at least it ought to be.

From New Orleans O. Henry moved to New York and became, for the rest of his life, a unit among the "four million" dwellers in flats and apartment houses and sand-stone palaces who live within the roar of the elevated railway, and from whom the pale light of the moon and the small effects of the planetary system are overwhelmed in the glare of the Great White Way. Here O. Henry's finest work was done,—inimitable, unsurpassable stories that make up the volumes entitled *The Four Million*, *The Trimmed Lamp*, and *The Voice of the City*.

Marvellous indeed they are. Written offhand with the bold carelessness of the pen that only genius dare use, but revealing behind them such a glowing of the imagination and such a depth of understanding of the human heart as only genius can make manifest.

What O. Henry did for Central America he does again for New York. It is transformed by the magic of his imagination. He waves a wand over it and it becomes a city of mystery and romance. It is no longer the roaring, surging

metropolis that we thought we knew, with its clattering elevated, its unending crowds, and on every side the repellent selfishness of the rich, the grim struggle of the poor, and the listless despair of the outcast. It has become, as O. Henry loves to call it, Bagdad upon the Subway. The glare has gone. There is a soft light suffusing the city. Its corner drug-stores turn to enchanted bazaars. From the open doors of its restaurants and palm rooms, there issues such a melody of softened music that we feel we have but to cross the threshold and there is Bagdad waiting for us beyond. A transformed waiter hands us to a chair at a little table,—Arabian, I will swear it,—beside an enchanted rubber tree. There is red wine such as Omar Khayyam drank, here on Sixth Avenue. At the tables about us are a strange and interesting crew,—dervishes in the disguise of American business men, caliphs masquerading as tourists, bedouins from Syria and fierce fantassins from the desert turned into western visitors from Texas, and among them—can we believe our eyes,—houris from the inner harems of Ispahan and Candahar, whom we mistook but yesterday for the ladies of a Shubert chorus! As we pass out we pay our money to an enchanted cashier with golden hair,—sitting behind glass,—under the spell of some magician without a doubt,—and then taking O. Henry's hand we wander forth among the ever changing scenes of night adventure, the mingled tragedy and humour of The Four Million that his pen alone can depict. Now did ever Haroun al Raschid and his viziers, wandering at will in the narrow streets of their Arabian city, meet such varied adventure as lies before us, strolling hand in hand with O. Henry in the new Bagdad that he reveals.

But let us turn to the stories themselves. O. Henry wrote in all two hundred short stories of an average of about fifteen pages each. This was the form in which his literary activity shaped itself by instinct. A novel he never wrote. A play he often meditated but never achieved. One of his books,—*Cabbages and Kings*,—can make a certain claim to be continuous. But even this is rather a collection of little stories than a single piece of fiction. But it is an error of the grossest kind to say that O. Henry's work is not sustained. In reality his canvas is vast. His New York stories, like those of Central America or of the west, form one great picture as gloriously comprehensive in its scope as the lengthiest novels of a Dickens or the canvas of a Da Vinci. It is only the method that is different, not the result.

It is hard indeed to illustrate O. Henry's genius by the quotation of single phrases and sentences. The humour that is in his work lies too deep for that. His is not the comic wit that explodes the reader into a huge guffaw of laughter and vanishes. His humour is of that deep quality that smiles at life itself and mingles our amusement with our tears.

Still harder is it to try to shew the amazing genius of O. Henry as a "plot maker," as a designer of incident. No one better than he can hold the reader in suspense. Nay, more than that, the reader scarcely knows that he is "suspended," until at the very close of the story O. Henry, so to speak, turns on the lights and the whole tale is revealed as an entirety. But to do justice to a plot in a few paragraphs is almost impossible. Let the reader consider to what a few poor shreds even the best of our novels or plays is reduced, when we try to set forth the basis of it in the condensed phrase of a text-book of literature, or diminish it to the language of the "scenario" of a moving picture. Let us take an example.

We will transcribe our immortal *Hamlet* as faithfully as we can into a few words with an eye to explain the plot and nothing else. It will run about as follows:

"Hamlet's uncle kills his father and marries his mother, and Hamlet is so disturbed about this that he either is mad or pretends to be mad. In this condition he drives his sweetheart insane and she drowns, or practically drowns, herself. Hamlet then kills his uncle's chief adviser behind an arras either in mistake for a rat, or not. Hamlet then gives poison to his uncle and his mother, stabs Laertes and kills himself. There is much discussion among the critics as to whether his actions justify us in calling him insane."

There! The example is, perhaps, not altogether convincing. It does not seem somehow, faithful though it is, to do Shakespeare justice. But let it at least illustrate the point under discussion. The mere bones of a plot are nothing. We could scarcely form a judgment on female beauty by studying the skeletons of a museum of anatomy.

But with this distinct understanding, let me try to present the outline of a typical O. Henry story. I select it from the volume entitled *The Gentle Grafter*, a book that is mainly concerned with the wiles of Jeff Peters and his partners and associates. Mr. Peters, who acts as the narrator of most of the stories, typifies the perennial fakir and itinerant grafter of the Western States,—ready to turn his hand to anything from selling patent medicines under a naphtha lamp on the street corner of a western town to peddling bargain Bibles from farm to farm,—anything in short that does not involve work and carries with it the peculiar excitement of trying to keep out of the State penitentiary. All the world loves a grafter,—at least a genial and ingenious grafter,—a Robin Hood who plunders an abbot to feed a beggar, an Alfred Jingle, a Scapin, a Raffles,—or any of the multifarious characters of the world's literature who reveal the fact that much that is best in humanity may flourish even on the shadowy side of technical iniquity. Of this glorious company is Mr. Jefferson Peters. But let us take him as he is revealed in *Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet* and let us allow him

to introduce himself and his business.

"I struck Fisher Hill," Mr. Peters relates, "in a buckskin suit, moccasins, long hair and a thirty-carat diamond ring that I got from an actor in Texarkana. I don't know what he ever did with the pocket-knife I swapped him for it.

"I was Dr. Waugh-hoo, the celebrated Indian medicine man. I carried only one best bet just then, and that was Resurrection Bitters. It was made of life-giving plants and herbs accidentally discovered by Ta-qua-la, the beautiful wife of the chief of the Choctaw Nation, while gathering truck to garnish a platter of boiled dog for an annual corn dance. . . ." In the capacity of Dr. Waugh-hoo, Mr. Peters "struck Fisher Hill." He went to a druggist and got credit for half a gross of eight-ounce bottles and corks, and with the help of the running water from the tap in the hotel room, he spent a long evening manufacturing Resurrection Bitters. The next evening the sales began. The bitters at fifty cents a bottle "started off like sweetbreads on toast at a vegetarian dinner." Then there intervenes a constable with a German silver badge. "Have you got a city license?" he asks, and Mr. Peters' medicinal activity comes to a full stop. The threat of prosecution under the law for practising medicine without a license puts Mr. Peters for the moment out of business.

He returns sadly to his hotel, pondering on his next move. Here by good fortune he meets a former acquaintance, a certain Andy Tucker, who has just finished a tour in the Southern States, working the Great Cupid Combination Package on the chivalrous and unsuspecting south.

"Andy," says Jeff, in speaking of his friend's credentials, "was a good street man: and he was more than that—he respected his profession and was satisfied with 300 per cent. profit. He had plenty of offers to go into the illegitimate drug and garden seed business, but he was never to be tempted off the straight path."

Andy and Jeff take counsel together in long debate on the porch of the hotel.

And here, apparently, a piece of good luck came to Jeff's help. The very next morning a messenger brings word that the Mayor of the town is suddenly taken ill. The only doctor of the place is twenty miles away. Jeff Peters is summoned to the Mayor's bedside. . . . "This Mayor Banks," Jeff relates, "was in bed all but his whiskers and feet. He was making internal noises that would have had everybody in San Francisco hiking for the parks. A young man was standing by the bedside holding a cup of water. . . ." Mr. Peters, called to the patient's side, is very cautious. He draws attention to the fact that he is not a qualified practitioner, is not "a regular disciple of S. Q. Lapius."

The Mayor groans in pain. The young man at the bedside, introduced as Mr. Biddle, the Mayor's nephew, urges Mr. Peters,—or Doctor Waugh-hoo,—in the

name of common humanity to attempt a cure.

Finally Jeff Peters promises to treat the Mayor by "scientific demonstration." He proposes, he says, to make use of the "great doctrine of psychic financiering—of the enlightening school of long-distance subconscious treatment of fallacies and meningitis,—of that wonderful in-door sport known as personal magnetism." But he warns the Mayor that the treatment is difficult. It uses up great quantities of soul strength. It comes high. It cannot be attempted under two hundred and fifty dollars.

The Mayor groans. But he yields. The treatment begins.

"You ain't sick," says Dr. Waugh-hoo, looking the patient right in the eye. "You ain't got any pain. The right lobe of your perihelion is subsided."

The result is surprising. The Mayor's system seems to respond at once. "I do feel some better, Doc," he says, "darned if I don't."

Mr. Peters assumes a triumphant air. He promises to return next day for a second and final treatment.

"I'll come back," he says to the young man, "at eleven. You may give him eight drops of turpentine and three pounds of steak. Good morning."

Next day the final treatment is given. The Mayor is completely restored. Two hundred and fifty dollars, all in cash, is handed to "Dr. Waugh-hoo." The young man asks for a receipt. It is no sooner written out by Jeff Peters, than:

"'Now do your duty, officer,' says the Mayor, grinning much unlike a sick man.

"Mr. Biddle lays his hand on my arm.

"'You're under arrest, Dr. Waugh-hoo, alias Peters,' says he, 'for practising medicine without authority under the State law.'

"'Who are you?' I asks.

"'I'll tell you who he is,' says Mr. Mayor, sitting up in bed. 'He's a detective employed by the State Medical Society. He's been following you over five counties. He came to me yesterday and we fixed up this scheme to catch you. I guess you won't do any more doctoring around these parts, Mr. Fakir. What was it you said I had, Doc?' the Mayor laughs, 'compound—well, it wasn't softening of the brain, I guess, anyway.'"

Ingenious, isn't it? One hadn't suspected it. But will the reader kindly note the conclusion of the story as it follows, handled with the lightning rapidity of a conjuring trick.

"'Come on, officer,' says I, dignified. 'I may as well make the best of it.' And then I turns to old Banks and rattles my chains.

"'Mr. Mayor,' says I, 'the time will come soon when you'll believe that personal magnetism is a success. And you'll be sure that it succeeded in this case, too.'

"And I guess it did.

"When we got nearly to the gate, I says: 'We might meet somebody now, Andy. I reckon you better take 'em off, and——' Hey? Why, of course it was Andy Tucker. That was his scheme; and that's how we got the capital to go into business together."

Now let us set beside this a story of a different type, *The Furnished Room*, which appears in the volume called *The Four Million*. It shows O. Henry at his best as a master of that supreme pathos that springs, with but little adventitious aid of time or circumstance, from the fundamental things of life itself. In the sheer art of narration there is nothing done by Maupassant that surpasses *The Furnished Room*. The story runs,—so far as one dare attempt to reproduce it without quoting it all word for word,—after this fashion.

The scene is laid in New York, in the lost district of the lower West Side, where the wandering feet of actors and one-week transients seek furnished rooms in dilapidated houses of fallen grandeur.

One evening after dark a young man prowled among these crumbling red mansions, ringing their bells. At the twelfth he rested his lean hand-baggage upon the step and wiped the dust from his hatband and forehead. The bell sounded faint and far away in some remote hollow depths. . . . "I have the third floor back vacant since a week back," says the landlady. . . . "It's a nice room. It ain't often vacant. I had some most elegant people in it last summer—no trouble at all and paid in advance to the minute. The water's at the end of the hall. Sprowls and Mooney kept it three months. They done a vaudeville sketch. Miss B'retta Sprowls, you may have heard of her,—Oh, that was just the stage name—right there over the dresser is where the marriage certificate hung, framed. The gas is here and you see there's plenty of closet room. It's a room every one likes. It never stays idle long——"

The young man takes the room, paying a week in advance. Then he asks:

"A young girl—Miss Vashner—Miss Eloise Vashner—do you remember such a one among your lodgers? She would be singing on the stage most likely."

The landlady shakes her head. They comes and goes, she tells him, she doesn't call that one to mind.

It is the same answer that he has been receiving, up and down, in the crumbling houses of the lost district, through weeks and months of wandering. No, always no. Five months of ceaseless interrogation and the inevitable negative. So much time

spent by day in questioning managers, agents, schools and choruses; by night among the audiences of theatres from allstar casts down to music halls so low that he dreaded to find what he most hoped for. . . . The young man, left in his sordid room of the third floor back, among its decayed furniture, its ragged brocade upholstery, sinks into a chair. The dead weight of despair is on him. . . . Then, suddenly, as he rested there, the room was filled with the strong, sweet odour of mignonette—the flower that she had always loved, the perfume that she had always worn. It is as if her very presence was beside him in the empty room. He rises. He cries aloud, "What, dear?" as if she had called to him. She has been there in the room. He knows it. He feels it. Then eager, tremulous with hope, he searches the room, tears open the crazy chest of drawers, fumbles upon the shelves, for some sign of her. Nothing and still nothing,—a crumpled playbill, a half-smoked cigar, the dreary and ignoble small records of many a peripatetic tenant, but of the woman that he seeks, nothing. Yet still that haunting perfume that seems to speak her presence at his very side.

The young man dashes trembling from the room. Again he questions the landlady,—was there not, before him in the room, a young lady? Surely there must have been,—fair, of medium height, and with reddish gold hair? Surely there was?

But the landlady, as if obdurate, shakes her head. "I can tell you again," she says, "'twas Sprowls and Mooney, as I said. Miss B'retta Sprowls, it was, in the theatres, but Missis Mooney she was. The marriage certificate hung, framed, on a nail over——"

. . . The young man returns to his room. It is all over. His search is vain. The ebbing of his last hope has drained his faith. . . . For a time he sat staring at the yellow, singing gaslight. Then he rose. He walked to the bed and began to tear the sheets into strips. With the blade of his knife he drove them tightly into every crevice around windows and door. When all was snug and taut he turned out the light, turned the gas full on again and laid himself gratefully upon the bed.

And now let the reader note the ending paragraphs of the story, so told that not one word of it must be altered or abridged from the form in which O. Henry framed it.

It was Mrs. McCool's night to go with the can for beer. So she fetched it and sat with Mrs. Purdy (the landlady) in one of those subterranean retreats where housekeepers foregather and the worm dieth seldom.

"I rented out my third floor, back, this evening," said Mrs. Purdy, across a fine

circle of foam. "A young man took it. He went up to bed two hours ago."

"Now, did ye, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am?" said Mrs. McCool, with intense admiration. "You do be a wonder for rentin' rooms of that kind. And did ye tell him, then?" she concluded in a husky whisper, laden with mystery.

"Rooms," said Mrs. Purdy, in her furriest tones, "are furnished for to rent. I did not tell him, Mrs. McCool."

"'Tis right ye are, ma'am; 'tis by renting rooms we kape alive. Ye have the rale sense for business, ma'am. There be many people will rayjict the rentin' of a room if they be tould a suicide has been after dyin' in the bed of it."

"As you say, we has our living to be making," remarked Mrs. Purdy.

"Yis, ma'am; 'tis true. 'Tis just one wake ago this day I helped ye lay out the third floor, back. A pretty slip of a colleen she was to be killin' herself wid the gas—a swate little face she had, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am."

"She'd a-been called handsome, as you say," said Mrs. Purdy, assenting but critical, "but for that mole she had a-growin' by her left eyebrow. Do fill up your glass again, Mrs. McCool."

Beyond these two stories, I do not care to go. But if the reader is not satisfied let him procure for himself the story called *A Municipal Report* in the volume *Strictly Business*. After he has read it he will either pronounce O. Henry one of the greatest masters of modern fiction or else,—well, or else he is a jackass. Let us put it that way.

O. Henry lived some nine years in New York but little known to the public at large. Towards the end there came to him success, a competence and something that might be called celebrity if not fame. But it was marvellous how his light remained hid. The time came when the best known magazines eagerly sought his work. He could have commanded his own price. But the notoriety of noisy success, the personal triumph of literary conspicuousness he neither achieved nor envied. A certain cruel experience of his earlier days—tragic, unmerited and not here to be recorded,—had left him shy of mankind at large and, in the personal sense, anxious only for obscurity. Even when the American public in tens and hundreds of thousands read his matchless stories, they read them, so to speak, in isolated fashion, as personal discoveries, unaware for years of the collective greatness of O. Henry's work viewed as a total. The few who were privileged to know him, seem to have valued him beyond all others and to have found him even greater than his work. And then, in mid-career as it seemed, there was laid upon him the hand of a wasting

and mortal disease, which brought him slowly to his end, his courage and his gentle kindliness unbroken to the last. “I shall die,” he said one winter with one of the quoted phrases that fell so aptly from his lips, “in the good old summer time.” And “in the good old summer time” with a smile and a jest upon his lips he died. “Don’t turn down the light,” he is reported to have said to those beside his bed, and then, as the words of a popular song flickered across his mind, he added, “I’m afraid to go home in the dark.”

That was five years ago. Since his death, his fame in America has grown greater and greater with every year. The laurel wreath that should have crowned his brow is exchanged for the garland laid upon his grave. And the time is coming, let us hope, when the whole English-speaking world will recognise in O. Henry one of the great masters of modern literature.

IX.—A Rehabilitation of Charles II

It is perhaps a far cry from the subjects treated in the previous chapters to the topic of Charles the Second. But I have a special reason for introducing his name. In my schooldays Charles II was always my particular hero. His amiable common sense and his native good-humour seemed to mark him out from the fussy, self-important egotistic monarchs who sprawl wide anon the pages of history and obliterate from our view everything except their trivial personalities. I always felt that if I ever had a chance I would like to do something for King Charles. I have it now. A whole book lies open to me, which I can fill as I like. I cannot conclude this volume of essays better than by devoting the last of them to the memory of one whose character I would wish to imitate and for whose quaint and inimitable humour I have long cherished a despairing admiration.

In any case the subject which I propose to treat is eminently congenial to the peculiar tendencies of the historical writing of our time. Historical rehabilitation is emphatically the order of the day, and it has become the peculiar province and the particular pride of the modern historian to expose the errors of his predecessors. His superior access to original sources of information enables him to direct upon the events of the past a flood of "dry light" which reveals them in a new perspective. The lights and shadows are shifted upon the landscape of history. What formerly appeared imposing dwindles to the enlightened eye, and figures forgotten in the obscurity of ignorance are revealed in a new and majestic stature. The estimates of character and achievement which have formed the commonplaces of our national knowledge are overthrown, and the temple of fame rudely cleared of its former inmates to make way for the smiling crowd of white-washed sinners carrying each his new certificate of rehabilitation.

Washington and Lady Jane Grey veil their shamed faces and hurry from its portals to give place to Machiavelli and Madame de Pompadour. Thus it is that we live in an age of historical surprises. We know now that Rome was not founded by Romulus, that the apple shot by William Tell was not lying on his son's head at the immediate time of the shooting, and that America was not in the true sense of the term discovered by Christopher Columbus, who had spent eighteen years of tearful persuasion in trying to prove that there was no such continent. As with the events of history so with the characters that have adorned or defiled its pages. In the light of our recent knowledge we know that Hump-backed Richard had no hump at all, but was on the contrary of a singularly erect and commanding figure, the name "hump-

backed" being merely an expression of easy familiarity and subtle flattery, as who should say "short" to a tall man, or "fatty" of a man deplorably thin. The secret suffocation of Richard's nephews in the Tower is not to be attributed to him as a fault. He suffocated them secretly because to have suffocated them in any other way would have seemed needlessly ostentatious. In the same way, Pope Gregory VII now appears to have been an ardent Protestant. The Duke of Clarence, whose name has suffered from his connection with a certain butt of Malmsey wine, was a total abstainer. The Borgias were quiet people distinguished only by their love of gardening and the rectitude of their family relations. On the reverse side, Washington was a lifelong slave-driver, Queen Elizabeth did her utmost, whether deliberately or by negligence, to help the Spanish Armada, and Pitt, the darling of his country, died, not with a prayer for England's welfare on his lips, as our school books taught us, but murmuring that he "thought he could eat a pork pie."

In so far as I am aware, there are at present no historical characters to whom this process of rehabilitation or the reverse has not been applied, with the exception of Charles II. In undertaking the defence of so amiable a personage, I need hardly offer an apology. Charles II belongs to a general class of individuals who have never yet met their true deserts at the hands of their contemporaries and successors. Too much has been said of the heroes of history,—the strong men, the strenuous men, the troublesome men; too little of the amiable, the kindly, and the tolerant. It is perhaps the strenuous and the purposeful who keep the wheels of human progress moving, but it is the broad-minded tolerance of easy-going indolence that keeps the friction of opinion from clogging the machinery of progress. The strenuous men have had their apotheosis: their names are inscribed in brass, their busts are carved in stone on the temples and monuments of an admiring world. But where is the record of the nobly indolent, the names of those great men whose resolute inertia and whose self-denying negation of the necessity of effort have rendered possible the false eminence of their fellows? In the history of religious controversy the real progress has been made by those inspired with an intense lack of fixed opinion: the history of invention is the history of applied idleness. To shirk work is to abbreviate labour. To shirk argument is to settle controversy. To shirk war is to cherish peace.

Much that has been written to the disparagement of Charles II is in reality to be ascribed to the essential superiority of his mind. He possessed in an eminent degree that largeness of view, that breadth of mental vision which sees things in their true perspective. He had grasped as but few men have done the great truth that nothing really matters very much. He was able to see that the burning questions of to-day become the forgotten trifles of yesterday, and that the eager controversy of the

present fades into the litter of the past. To few it has been given to see things as they are, to know that no opinion is altogether right, no purpose altogether laudable, and no calamity altogether deplorable. To carry in one's mind an abiding sense of the futility of human endeavour and the absurdity of human desire is a sure protection against the malignant narrowness that marks the men endowed with fixed convictions and positive ideas. For the same reason it is found that the man of real enlightenment is inevitably reckoned a trifler and is accused of shallowness and insincerity, while a dull man heavily digesting his few ideas is credited with a profundity which he does not possess. In this lies the real explanation of the alleged mental frivolity and culpable levity of Charles II. While London was burning he is said to have chased a moth up and down the room absorbed with the amusement of the pursuit. He habitually slept during the sermons of the court preacher before whom decorum compelled his bodily presence. He lounged in the gallery of the House of Lords declaring their debates "as good as a play." He scribbled little jokes to Clarendon across the Council table. For literary exercise he wrote riddles in rhyme, no doubt a great improvement on the hymns written by his father and the philosophical treatises of his grandparent. He twitted the Royal Society with spending all their time in "weighing air"; and perplexed their proceedings for a month by requesting a solution of the problem, "Why is it that a bucket of water into which a live fish is thrown weighs no more after the fish is put in than it did before?" The king indeed was never tired of a jest, and was able to appreciate the point of a joke, even if turned against himself. The whole chronicle of his personal life is illuminated by his exquisite sense of humour. No man has left behind him a more lasting monument of witty sayings than did Charles. Yet his humour was always of that tolerant gentle character that bespeaks of lofty mind. "Good jests," he said, "ought to bite like lambs, not dogs: they should cut, not wound." As a child of seven he wrote his royal tutor, "I would not have you take too much Phisik, for it doth alwaies make me worse, and I think it will do the like with you." Here we have already the balanced mind rising superior to the prejudices of his time. He died, as every history tells us, with a murmured apology on his lips for being "such an unconscionable time in dying." Throughout his long and varied career the central feature in his view of life was that of a kindly amusement at the littleness of human things. The mummeries of kingship, the formalities of state did not deceive him. "I would willingly," he said one day to Clarendon, "make a visit to my sister; where can I find the time?" "I suppose," answered Clarendon, "your Majesty will go with a light train." "I intend to take nothing but my night bag." "You will not," expostulated the minister, "travel without 40 or 50 horse." "I count that part of my night bag," said the king. Even at the great

crises of his life his humour did not desert him. "The truth is," he declared during the troublous year of the Test Act,—"that this year the government" (meaning of course himself) "thrives marvellous well, for it eats and drinks and sleeps as heartily as I have ever known it, nor does it vex and disquiet itself with that foolish, idle and impertinent thing called business." A little later when his brother James expressed his apprehensiveness lest Charles's conduct might lead to his expulsion from the throne, "Never fear, James," said the amiable monarch, "they will never get rid of me to make you king." It is due to this habit of constant jesting that the quality of the king's intellect has been so sadly underrated. Endowed in reality with mental capacity of the highest order, the very superiority of his mind led him to disparage the serious concerns of life and to attach a seemingly inordinate importance to the trifles of the passing hour.

But let us turn from the general character of Charles to consider the political aspect of his reign. Under what a heavy burden of obloquy Charles rests I need hardly remind the reader. His memory for 200 years has been a target for the sneering criticism of generations of historians. Piety has denounced the amiable king's lack of religion; patriotism has felt its breast swell at his mysterious dealings with the crown of France; cynicism has sneered at his levity and thoughtlessness, and matronly virtue frowns with perennial disapproval of the most indecorous of sovereigns. "He was," says Hume, "negligent of the interests of the nation, careless of its glory, averse to its religion, jealous of its liberty, lavish of its treasure, . . . he exposed it to the danger of a furious civil war, and to the ruin and ignominy of a foreign conquest." To this Macaulay adds that he was "fond of sauntering and amusement, incapable of self-denial and exertion, without faith in human virtue or human attachment." "He shewed," says Mr. Airy, the latest of his indignant biographers, "a more than oriental ingratitude." "All his natural advantages," writes Mr. Bright, "were neutralized by his selfishness: his own ease and pursuit of pleasure were the objects dearest to himself." Green mocks at his diplomacy, May doubts his constitutionality, and Goldwin Smith stands over his death bed with a satanic sneer at his last moments. More scathing than all, the virtuous pen of Arabella Buckley, writing for the benefit of beginners, chronicles the crowning indictment,—"he was not a good man."

Gathering together all the different heads of accusation that are preferred against Charles, we find them to be somewhat as follows. It is alleged against him that both his internal and external policy, as well as the irregularity of his private conduct, degraded and lowered the English monarchy; that he rendered himself subservient to King Louis XIV of France, basely accepting gifts and a yearly pension to subvert the

true interests of his kingdom; that he made war against the Dutch, and that he persecuted the Presbyterians. In point of religion it is variously objected that he had too much and that he had none at all; some historians stand aghast at the fact that Charles was a devout Catholic, others are equally indignant that he was not a Catholic at all.

In such a maze of accusation it is difficult to find one's way: to refute one charge is to concede another: to defend the king's memory from the attack of one writer is to expose him to the polemics of another. Let us, however, consider in detail some of the graver charges usually advanced. First of all may be placed the general bearing of Charles's reign on the position of the English monarchy and the part he played, ill or otherwise, in the development of the constitution. And here let me state boldly and flatly my opinion, reached after forty-six years of profound reflection, that Charles II is to be looked upon as the true founder of the present monarchy; it is to him that a grateful and loyal people ought to attribute the survival and consolidation of monarchical institutions in England. We have heard too much of William III and George I; the chronic cough of the one and the hiccoughing German of the other have been too long the object of the fervent admiration of the thankful Briton. The Protestant succession was undoubtedly a beautiful thing: we recognise the fact when at each successive coronation we invite our sovereign to swear to his detestation of popery in terms as offensively contrived as possible. But miraculous and admirable as is the official protestantism of the monarch, it is not the prime consideration. The institution of monarchy itself is first to be considered. The kingship is the central part of the British constitution, the keystone of the political arch without which all else falls into confusion. It was the peculiar merit of Charles II that in an age of unparalleled civil turmoil he enabled the monarchy to survive. To his personal tact, his suavity, his kindliness, his superiority to the promptings of revenge, it is to be ascribed that the kingship, shaken from its base in the turmoil of the Civil war, was again established and consolidated. Consider the situation at the time of Charles's accession. For eleven years England had been a republic. The divinity of kingship was gone. The nation had seen an outraged people rise against their monarch, dethrone him, and erect a successful and glorious commonwealth amid the ruins of the monarchy. It is all very well for historians to argue that the Commonwealth was a virtual monarchy, that Cromwell was in reality a king and the substance of monarchical institutions remained when the form vanished. The fact remains that in name at any rate,—and the name is everything in the British system,—Cromwell was not king of England. Nor had he any connection by descent, affiliation, or adoption with any previous sovereign. He was in reality merely the elected head of the people,—the strong man

chosen by his own ability and ruling by a delegated power. The Instrument of Government drawn up as the new basis of English institutions was nothing more or less than the constitution of a republic. It was an embodiment of the theory of democratic popular sovereignty, a hundred years in advance of the great political experiments of America and France. The restored monarchy, welcomed as it was with the clapping of hands and the guzzling of wine, rested on no firm basis. Placed in the hands of a king devoid of the peculiar personality of Charles II, it would have fallen again, this time to rise no more. Charles knew, the shrewder royalists knew, and the leaders of the outgoing republic knew that the monarchy was on its trial, that it was not of necessity the last phase of the political evolution, the concluding act of the great drama of the 17th century. Monk himself, who lives in history as the restorer of the royal sun to the darkened land, knew this and acted on it. He urged upon the king to fill his council with the adherents of the late *régime*: he put no trust in a purely monarchical establishment. He saw hovering in the background of the newly illuminated political sky the retreating cloud of puritan republicanism that might again obscure its effulgence. Consider the matter in the reasonable light of common sense. Charles returned after eleven years of exile to a people that scarcely knew him, from whose midst he had been expelled before he was twenty years of age. By birth he was half a foreigner, by residence he had become more than half an alien. Of his new subjects a good half had been in arms, or in sympathy with those in arms against all that was associated with his family name. Till the very moment of his coronation a veteran puritan soldiery was under arms. Welcome him as might the sycophants of the court and the devotees of the wine vat, his accession was only wrung with reluctance from the puritan part of the nation. Nothing but the strained circumstances of the moment induced them to give to his kingship a reluctant and provisional assent. At the opening of his reign a false step would have been fatal. To have played the monarch too much would have fanned to a new flame the embers of the civil war: to have played it too little would have alienated all on whose support the new king was chiefly compelled to rely. Imagine, if one can, some of the other kings of the period placed in the situation in which Charles found himself. Had the narrow and malignant James, his brother, been called to the throne, the kingship could not have lasted out the year. Under the witless guidance of his slobbering grandfather, the first James, or under the unbending arrogance of his father, or the pretentious absolutism of his relative, Louis XIV, the kingship would have met a speedy downfall. Under Charles II the monarchy, restored with hesitation and doubt, slowly proved itself to the nation as the guarantee of internal stability and domestic peace. The reason for this lies in the natural adaptability of the new monarch to his

unique situation. He had not been a month upon the throne before the malcontent part of his nation felt that the new era was not to be one of vengeance and retaliation for the past. The down-trodden royalists who had nursed for eleven years their hatred of the dominant republicans now clamoured for the blood of their enemies. They urged the king to the wholesale slaughter of the opposing faction. Had Charles listened to his new parliament a sweeping Act would have been passed for the execution of all the prominent survivors of the Commonwealth party. Let us take the unwilling testimony of Mr. Airy on this point.

"In one part at least of the partial fulfilment of the Declaration from Breda, Charles took an important and creditable share. There was great danger—greater danger as the days passed—that, in spite of the composite character of the House of Commons, the spirit of retaliation might even there secure a bloody satisfaction. But a far more savage temper reigned in the Lords. The bill sent up from the Commons, *in consequence of an urgent message from the king*, 'excepted' (from the general amnesty) only eight of the king's judges, 'for life and estate,' and some twenty more 'for pains and penalties not extending to life.' The Lords resolved that all who had signed the warrant should die, and then 'all who were concerned in the murder.' Again Charles intervened. He insisted upon drawing a broad line between the regicides and all others. But for his promise, he told the Lords plainly, neither he nor they would have been there; his own honour and the public security alike demanded an indemnity for all except those immediately guilty of the crying sin. In the conferences between the houses, the Lords actually demanded the death of four members of Cromwell's High Court of Justice in revenge for the death of four of their own number condemned by that court, the victims to be chosen by the relations of the slain men. They even proposed to bring to the scaffold all who sat upon any court of justice by which Royalists had been tried. . . . It should not be forgotten that it was principally owing to Charles (and Clarendon) that, after a civil war which had its roots in the deepest feelings which can stir men's minds, after a despotism which had been established in blood and held its place amid the ruins of the constitution by the sword and only by the sword, the restoration of the old order was accomplished with slaughter which, when compared with the wrongs which seemed to call for vengeance, was well nigh insignificant."

So much for Mr. Airy, whose unwilling evidence is corroborated by the testimony of practically all the historians of the period. It is impossible to overestimate the political importance of the king's opportune clemency or to refuse to recognise the sublimity of mind to which it bears proof. More than any of his subjects the new king had wrongs to avenge. His father's head had fallen upon the

scaffold, he himself had been hounded into exile, escaping from his kingdom after weeks of imminent peril, compelled to wander deserted and shelterless, to know the pangs of hunger and to find himself destitute and penniless, a pensioner on the niggardly bounty of continental sovereigns. Had he been sufficiently ruthless and sufficiently impolitic he might for the moment have sated his vengeance in blood. The temper of his royalist supporters would have stopped at no extremes of retaliation. Pepys has left us in his Diary an account of the horrible butchery of Major-General Harrison, one of the regicides killed amid the plaudits of a sanguinary populace. "I went out," he writes, "to Charing Cross to see Major-General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered, which was done there; he looked as cheerful as any man could look in that condition. He was presently cut down and his head and heart shown to the people at which there were great shouts of joy." It was, as already said, Charles himself who imposed his veto on further executions. "I must confess," he said, "that I am weary of hanging except on new offences: let it sleep." Pepys bears witness to the king's clemency in saying,—"The king is a man of so great compassion that he would willingly acquit them all." If we turn from the internal history of England to the history of her colonies, we find that Charles's clemency made itself felt even there. In Virginia the struggles of the mother country had been reproduced on a smaller scale, and the restoration of the king brought with it the restoration of the royalist governor, Sir William Berkeley. The colonists, outraged by the stringency of the governor and his cavalier associates, broke into revolt, a revolt which collapsed as rapidly as it had started, owing to the death of the rebel leader. Berkeley at once set himself to the work of retaliation,—hanging and confiscating with an unsparing hand. The slaughter found no end until an imperative personal message from King Charles ordered Berkeley to stop. "That old fool," said Charles, in comment on the governor's conduct, "has put to death more people in that naked country than I did here for the murder of my father."

Enough has been said to establish on good authority the fact of Charles the Second's extraordinary magnanimity of mind. As he had shewed himself at his accession, so he remained throughout his reign. To cherish resentment was foreign to his nature, which seemed incapable of harbouring a personal animosity.

Let us now turn from the question of Charles II's general relation towards the monarchy to his dealings with the parliament. Doubtless we have all retained from our recollection of the history of the seventeenth century the general idea that Charles, like his father and grandfather before him, refused to govern according to the wishes of his parliaments. In this, by the way, he resembled not only his father and grandfather, but also good Queen Elizabeth, patriotic King Henry, and many

other royal notabilities of preceding centuries. But let us admit in its full extent the fact that, from the beginning to the end of his reign of twenty-five years, Charles had not the remotest intention of governing according to the will of parliament. Now this may seem a very shocking and dreadful thing—it may at first sight seem to carry with it sufficient condemnation of the king's administration. But to judge it so is to apply to the seventeenth century the ideas of the twentieth, and to confound institutions, which, while preserving their names, have entirely altered in character in the course of two hundred years. We of the twentieth century are accustomed to a royal *régime* that has become of a purely nominal character. Our king reigns but does not govern. It is his elevated function to deliver speeches which he does not compose, to give thanks for money which he does not get, to talk in the old lordly style of his troops, his navy, the war that he means to make, and the peace that he hopes to effect. But his real business consists in laying the foundation stones of public buildings, turning the first sod of railways, planting the first trees in botanical gardens, unveiling statues, pictures, and inscriptions, giving thanks, receiving thanks, bowing and being bowed to. These are the avocations that keep him busy, happy, harmless. To my mind there is something eminently pathetic in the twentieth-century king with his frock coat, his building trowel, his spade, his tree, his statues and the other paraphernalia of his office, his false magnificence and his actual impotence. He is colonel of ten regiments and does not command a single man, the head of a navy and has no power to fire a single gun, wears, in his days of grandeur, twenty uniforms in forty minutes and finds none to fit him. But this happy device by which the jaded monarch of the twentieth century,—the mere astral body of old-time kingship—is put through his paces at the bidding of a democratic nation,—this is the creation of the later time. In the seventeenth century nominal kingship did not exist, and was not dreamed of. To think it a proper ground of accusation against Charles II that he intended to govern his own kingdom, is to lose sight of historical perspective. As well reproach the England of his day for its lack of public education, its need of railroads, and the paucity of its newspapers, as object against a king of the seventeenth century that he intended to govern his own kingdom. William III himself had just the same intention, though the limitations of his situation and character prevented him from carrying it so fully into effect. Charles himself was perfectly clear and consistent in his views on this point. He intended to govern by royal prerogative (and I use the word in no offensive sense), aided by the advice of his parliament whenever such advice seemed sensible and reasonable. Nor did he by royal prerogative mean a monarchical tyranny. He meant the enlightened rule of the head of the nation, directed in the general interests. "I will never use arbitrary government myself," he said to the

turbulent and impossible parliament that met him at Oxford towards the close of his reign, "and am resolved not to suffer it in others." His characteristic point of view, indicated with the king's characteristically kindly spirit of comradeship, appears in his reception to a group of Berkshire petitioners, begging him not to delay in calling a new parliament (1680). "Gentlemen," said the amiable monarch, "we will argue the matter over a cup of ale when we meet at Windsor, though I wonder that my neighbours should meddle with my business."

But it is not only to be remembered that between the days of the Restoration and our time the recognised duties of the British king have altered: the parliament itself has undergone a change equally important. The parliament of our day represents the whole adult nation: it is chosen in fair open election by the people of the realm, and when it speaks it speaks with the voice of national authority. It has learned by the traditions and experience of preceding centuries to respect the existence within itself of a dissentient minority. His Majesty's Opposition is as much a part of our working constitution as His Majesty's administration. A modern parliament does not seek by the sheer brute force of a majority vote to slaughter its enemies, to impose its religion, to rob its opponents, and to victimize all who oppose it. Inspired by a just sense of its power and responsibilities, it seeks to represent the nation and not the uppermost faction of the hour, while the facilities offered by the modern press, ease of communication, and general enlightenment accord to its every determination the irresistible support or the irresistible condemnation of public opinion.

Now look at the parliaments of the seventeenth century. I need hardly remind my readers in how far they were representative. They were chosen from a minority of the English people. Not one person in fifty had any share in the choice of the House of Commons. England in the reign of Charles II was no more a democratic country than Spain. Its parliament represented not the nation, but merely the different factions of the land-owning class, keen in the pursuit of their own interest, firm in the suppression of the labouring masses, vindictive and implacable in their factional strife. To have turned loose the parliaments of Charles II to govern under a trowel-using, tree-planting king would have delivered the nation over to an unending strife of rival cliques and irresponsible factions. For proof of this, consider a moment the composition and character of the parliaments of Charles II. There were in all four of them. One that met in 1660 and lasted until 1679, one in 1679, one called in 1680, and a final parliament summoned in 1681 at Oxford, where the king claimed that the "air was sweeter."

The parliament of 1660 has been described as the "worst parliament that ever sat." This is strong language, but the authority is that of a writer of competence and

long a professor at Oxford. It has been described by a contemporary as a "parliament full of young men chosen by a furious people in spite of the Puritans." The youth of the members, it is only fair to say, did not alarm the king. "It is no great fault," he said, "as I mean to keep them till they have got beards." Keep them indeed he did for eighteen years, during which the record of their legislation, which would have been infinitely worse but for the opposition of the king, stands on the statute books as a lasting memorial of their incompetence and savagery. Heedless of the king's earnest plea for full religious toleration, they insisted on passing the series of statutes that rendered the era one of bitter religious persecution. I need not recall in detail the inhuman and unjust provisions of the Act of Uniformity, the Corporation Act, the Conventicle Act, and the Five-Mile Act. Dissenters and Catholics alike groaned under the scourge of parliamentary tyranny, while the victorious faction thrust on an unwilling nation the burden of an Anglican establishment. Read if you will of the long-borne sufferings of imprisoned ministers and hunted priests, the family prayer rudely interrupted by officers of the law, the Quakers dragged through the streets of London, death, confiscation and the iron hand of bigoted intolerance throughout the land, and you may realise the part played by the restoration parliament in the history of the church. Had they been given but a king of their own complexion, or a king willing to efface himself at their bidding, the nation would have known the horrors of a religious war. Nor is it in point of religion alone that this first of Charles's parliaments shewed its intolerance and ignorance. It was this same body that passed the Iniquitous Act of Settlement to hold the agricultural poor in their serfdom to the landed classes, and framed the Navigation Code to render the American Colonies the tributaries of the mother country.

To the second parliament of Charles II is ascribed the lasting renown of passing the Habeas Corpus Act, which has left an undeserved celebrity to its memory. This may be appreciated when it is known that the Act really was not supported by a majority, but that in order to squeeze it through the parliamentary tellers, in counting the members, counted one excessively fat gentleman by bulk instead of by tale, and reckoned him as *ten* votes for the bill.

Much has been written in reference to the religion or the irreligion of Charles II. It has been laid to his charge as a grave crime that he was a Roman Catholic, and that at the moment of his death he received the last sacraments of that church at the hands of a popish priest. Now let us admit that, to the minds of a great many people of the seventeenth century, to be a Roman Catholic was in and of itself a heinous offence. The Catholic belief was viewed as a sinful thing, the Catholic ritual as an idolatrous enormity. This was the era when Jesuit priests lay hidden at the risk of

their lives in country homes of those who still clung to the old belief, when popish priests were forbidden on pain of death to enter the northern colonies in America. Granting the full atrocity of Catholic belief in the minds of many of Charles's subjects, are we still to regard such a creed as a crime? Civilised humanity has long since recognised that religious opinion cannot be coerced, that every man has at least a right to his own belief about his own soul. If Charles II believed in a doctrine of salvation that is still the most widely accepted of all Christian faiths, wherein lies the sin? Let us place before the devout Protestant reader of British history a reversed case. We will imagine a French king, compelled from his policy to grant a nominal adherence to the ritual and outward formalities of Roman Catholicism, but cherishing in his secret heart a sustaining faith in the Protestant creed and calling to his death bed the services of a Scottish Calvinist to administer to him a final sermon on the inevitable damnation of the unjust. I cannot but think that such a monarch, had there ever been one, would have met from the Protestant world no such obloquy as has been given to the unfortunate Charles: his name would rather have been cited among great examples of triumphant Protestantism, a sovereign mindful of the welfare of his soul in despite of the temptations of his idolatrous surroundings.

But I do not incline to think that Charles was a Roman Catholic. In point of applied religion he was indeed a somewhat easy-going practitioner. He slept in church—this I believe being the first authenticated case of the custom—and he entertained a constitutional aversion to sermons. References to the ultimate punishment of sin were alien to his kindly instincts. The Scotch, indeed, during his ill-assorted union with them after his father's death had cured him of all taste for theology, and the three-hour sermons to which he had been compelled to submit during his Caledonian kingship had supplied him with a fund of compressed piety quite sufficient for all his future needs. A letter written during his kingship to his sister in Paris illustrates the king's view of sermons. "We have," he writes, "the same disease of sermons that you complain of there, but I hope you have the same convenience that the rest of the family has, of sleeping out most of the time, which is a great ease to those who are bound to hear them." One highly impertinent divine presumed to preach to the king upon the irregularities of his private life. Charles contented himself with a gentle admonition: "Tell him," he said, "that I am not angry to be told of my faults; but I would have it done in gentlemanlike manner." At another time we read of the king's pathetic complaint of an enthusiastic preacher who had "played the fool upon the doctrine of purgatory," and of another reverend gentleman who had compelled Charles to listen to what he called "a quite unnecessary sermon on the doctrine of original sin."

But after properly weighing the available evidence I do not think that Charles II is to be classed as a believer in Roman Catholicism. His religious belief appears indeed to have been unusually broad and philosophic,—the natural outcome of his absence of prejudice,—and to have led him to accept tenets taken from the dogmas of many different sects while granting a full adherence to none. His point of view in some respects was decidedly Calvinistic, in others emphatically Lutheran, while in more intricate points of religion he shows a strongly Socinian temper. There was much in his creed that was decidedly Manichæan, much that was Unitarian, not a little that was Trinitarian, and a great deal that was Latitudinarian. He held for example that it made no difference to his future salvation what he did in this world. This was pure Calvinism. The Socinians, it will be remembered, held that it made no difference whether the soul was an incorporated substance or an invisible essence. In this Charles entirely agreed with them. He agreed with the Lutherans in denying the importance of justification by works, but sided with the Antinomians in doubting the need of justification by faith. He was willing to concede the Unitarian doctrine that perhaps there is no such person as the devil, while not denying the Anglican contention that perhaps there is. It appears in all that the king's religious view was that delicately balanced character which appreciates the niceties of opposing doctrines but refrains from a final decision of the points in controversy.

Whatever was Charles's creed, there should be no doubt of the excellence of his heart. The monster of oriental ingratitude is a fiction of ill-disposed historians. Towards the parasites and sycophants of his court, it is true, he recognised no obligation whatever: he estimated them at their true worth and thrust them aside with contempt when it suited his fancy to be rid of them. But towards his real friends—those who had befriended him in exile or counselled him well in prosperity—he bore a lasting gratitude. The dismissal of Clarendon is often laid to his charge, but the charge is without foundation. For seven years after his restoration Charles had tolerated the familiar dictation of a minister who, affectionate, loyal and well meaning as he was, never realised that the king was no longer a fugitive stripling unable to think or act for himself. Clarendon fell, as Bismarck and others have fallen, a victim to the overweening assertiveness of senile wisdom.

To understand how abiding was Charles's sense of gratitude one need but read the long list of pensions and presents to all those, high and low, who had befriended him during his flight after the final defeat at Worcester. It has been maliciously objected that many of these handsome pensions and gratuities were left unpaid. Such an ungenerous criticism is scarcely worthy of remark. The state of Charles's exchequer frequently compelled him to forego the satisfaction of his private

gratuities. It is at any rate a fact that not a few of the pensions are paid by the British government to this day.

It has become a commonplace with historians to point to the foreign policy of Charles II (and in particular to his relations with France) as one of the gravest of his iniquities. It is quite true that he sold Dunkirk to the French, but this far from being a diplomatic blunder was dictated by the wisest policy. Dunkirk, lying as it does on the French side of the Straits of Dover, and affording to England a fortified base of operations against the French, could never have permanently remained a British possession. It is not, like Gibraltar, an isolated rock; it is an integral part of the French territory. Its retention by England would have been a standing guarantee of inveterate hostility. To sell it to the French was at once the part of prudence and generosity.

It is not generally known, but it is nevertheless a fact, that no one more than Charles was alive to the possibility of England's naval development, or more anxious for the expansion of England as a great maritime power. Had he been free from the factious opposition of a niggardly parliament, the era of Rodney and Nelson might have been anticipated by a hundred years. From his youth the king cherished a passion for the sea; yachting was his favourite pastime, and for ships and sailors of England he entertained an unaltering affection. The diarist Pepys, himself an official in the service of the admiralty, bears ample witness to Charles's profound interest in the navy. The king was never too busy to talk of his ships and to make plans for the naval expansion of British power. That England did not under his reign become a real naval power is no fault of Charles II: the blame is to be ascribed to the shortsighted policy of his parliament. With his wife's dowry he had received from Portugal, Tangier, a seaport of Morocco. This Charles planned to make a Mediterranean basis for English imperial power, a magnificent project that lay near his heart, but which the ineptitude of his advisers compelled him to relinquish.

The king himself has left us in general terms an admirable defence of his foreign policy. Some witty individual having remarked of him that he never said a foolish thing and never did a wise one, the saying reached the royal ears. Charles's good-natured comment was, "That may well be, since my discourse is my own, but my actions are my ministers'."

I should have liked in concluding this essay to offer a full explanation of Charles's treatment of the Scotch Covenanters. This unfortunately the limited time and space at my disposal will not allow, and I must content myself with a few words of general palliation. In the first place it must be admitted that the Scotch are a troublesome people. The history of Scotland is the history of trouble. I do not say that

persecution is good for the Scotch, but it may be doubted whether it is bad for them. At least it is to be noted that with the removal of religious persecution has come the disintegration and disruption of the Presbyterian church. It may possibly have been from a sagacious foreknowledge of the internecine strife of the Free Kirk, the Wee Kirk, the Auld Kirk, and the New Kirk, that Charles was led to try to keep the Scotch united in religion by offering them the stimulus of ill-treatment necessary to their peculiar temperament. The Scotch are never happy unless in adversity, never admirable except in calamity. They prefer bad weather to good, rain to sunshine, and everlasting damnation to the promise of perpetual bliss. Were this justification not amply sufficient, I might urge that Charles had suffered much at the hands of sermonising divines, that his treatment of the Scotch met the full approval of the most devout people of the Southern kingdom, and that after all the Scotch might have escaped ill-treatment by conversion to the Church of England. But I forbear to push these arguments to a conclusion, as I have already trespassed too long upon my readers' indulgence.

In conclusion, let me recall a short anecdote of the most illustrious of American humourists. Returning from a journey to Colorado, Mark Twain informed his friends with enthusiasm that he had sojourned beside a mountain lake whose waters were of such transparent limpidity that a ten-cent piece might be clearly seen lying on the bottom at a depth of 100 fathoms. Finding himself confronted with a distressing incredulity he offered to make a discount on the story at a fair compromise, and to say that at any rate a ten-dollar bill might have been seen floating on the surface. Similarly, let me say to my readers that though they may be conscientiously unable to digest all that I have told them of Charles II, I shall be nevertheless amply satisfied if they will believe the half of it.

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Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *Essays and Literary Studies* by Stephen Leacock]